



## **A hundred years later streetcars are still rattling in Baltic cities**

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Book review:  
Naimark's "Genocide"

# BALTIC WORLDS

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in Poland

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marginal Russia

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Wolves in myth  
and reality

## Cities in the Baltic

also in this issue

RUSSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FIGHTERS / DISSIDENCE IN VILNIUS / BERLIN FASHION / KRAKÓW STREET ART / ANDREI PLEȘU & JÜRGEN KOCKA

Illustration: KG Nilson

## Encounter between East and West

### "RUSSIAN CULTURE IN

**EXILE** (1921–1953)" was the theme of a two-day conference at the Courtauld Institute in London (November 2–3, 2012). The conference invitation was adorned with an illustration for an article in *Baltic Worlds* (IV:3), written by Karl Schlögel, about Russian emigration to Berlin and the West. Karin Sunvisson's illustration is republished here.

Conference organizer Natalia Murray took the opportunity to launch a book, *The Unsung Hero of the Russian Avant-Garde: The Life and Times of Nikolay Punin*, on a key figure in Russian art criticism – a person who had exceptional knowledge of modern art trends in the West and, as a young communist, had collaborated with the Cultural Commissar Lunacharsky; who tried to live in a kind of internal exile, and perished in the Gulag in Vorutka; and who for posterity has been



Illustration: Karin Sunvisson

overshadowed by his mistress Anna Akhmatova.

Among the speakers at the conference were Andrei Tolstoy from the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, who presented a broad survey of Russian influences on European art during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Leslie Chamberlain, author of an acclaimed book on the "philosophy steamer" bearing Russian intellectuals forced into exile, which set sail in 1921, shortly after the Russian Civil War: she talked about the relationship between the

philosophy of language and artistic expressionism in the young, exiled Roman Jakobson.

Robert Chandler, poet and translator of the likes of Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Leskov, Vasily Grossman, Andrei Platonov, and Varlam Shalamov, gave an address in which he showed how the question that Chernyshevsky once posed and Lenin tried to answer, *Shto delat?* (What is to be done?), was kept alive, albeit in an ironic way, in Russian émigré literary circles – in this case by the writer Nadezhda Teffi (1872–1952).

The editors hope that participants in the conference on Russian exile culture will contribute texts to *BW* during the coming publication year. ✖

Note: For more information see [www.courtauld.ac.uk/researchforum/index.shtml](http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/researchforum/index.shtml).

## Painting

**COVER ARTIST** KG Nilson is a renowned Swedish painter who for several years was a professor at the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts. His studios are in Stockholm (in the same apartment where Anders Zorn used to reside) and in Bästekille, on Sweden's southern Baltic shore. ✖

## Corrections

**IN MAGNUS LUNGGREN'S** article "August Strindberg" (*BW* V:2, p. 32), Stringberg's *Ensam* was referred to under two different names in English, potentially causing confusion. One was a gloss, a literal translation of the word *ensam*: "Alone", the other was the name that one particular translator happened to choose for his translation of *Ensam*, "Days of Loneliness". Both the gloss "Alone" and the title "Days of Loneliness" refer to the same work, *Ensam*. In addition, a misprint in a quotation from Pyast's memoirs fundamentally changes the meaning of a key sentence: "You, the abode of the writer of *Days of Loneliness*, my first Strindberg book ---, chose: I have been in you!" should actually read: "You, the abode *that* the writer [...]" (Emphasis ours.)

In addition, in Kjetil Duvold's article "Fear and Loathing in Lithuania" (*BW* V:2, pp. 40–47), the last column in table 4 contained inaccurate data. A corrected table can be found and downloaded in PDF format at [balticworlds.com](http://balticworlds.com).

We regret these errors. ✖

## editors' column

### Scholarly rigor & open access

**THE AUTUMN ISSUE** of *Baltic Worlds* is a thick double issue. The heft has increased, but the underlying concept is the same: scholarly, peer-reviewed articles from various disciplines, reviews written by experts, and high-quality popular science/journalistic articles.

*Baltic Worlds* has been added to the Norwegian bibliometric register "Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH)" and assigned Level 1, which means that a peer-reviewed article published in *BW* will generate one publication point for the authors and their institutions. The Norwegian register includes more than 20,000 journals. As of this writing, *BW* is one of seven journals published in Sweden in the assigned category of international policy that have achieved Level 1.

In order to reach Level 1, a journal must:

- Present novel insights (original research);
- Be in a form that makes the results reproducible or useful in new research;
- Be presented in a language and via a distribution; channel that makes it accessible to most scholars who

may be interested in it;

- Be presented in a publishing channel that has sophisticated procedures for peer review.

**A JOURNAL MAY** also be assigned Level 2.

The requirements for this level include that the journal must be a leader in its field of research, which, for a multidisciplinary journal like *BW*, may not be applicable. Nevertheless, the editorial board will continue to develop the procedures of our peer review system to assure the rigorous quality standards imposed by Level 2.

The editors of *BW* encourage researchers to continue submitting articles for peer review. More detailed instructions are available on our website under "Become a contributor".

In addition, *BW* is now an accepted open

access online journal. We are included in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). All peer-reviewed articles and scholarly reviews on the *BW* website may be freely downloaded and reproduced. These articles become searchable in all catalogs and databases that retrieve data from DOAJ. This provides good opportunities for authors of scholarly articles published in *BW* to be read and cited by other scholars.

*BW* will however continue welcoming readers and writers outside the academic world. In this issue for instance we read about the proliferation of gated communities in Poland, human attitudes towards wild animals in northern Europe, and human rights activists in Russia. ✖

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# Concerning colonialism

Colonialism, ladies and gentlemen, is not a particularly modern phenomenon, nor can one rightly say it is a thing of the past. European history is rife with instances of both external and internal colonialism. The Crusades may be regarded as an example of the former – and the crusaders not only went south towards Constantinople and the Holy Land, but also to the east and the north.

In his book *The Making of Europe* (1993), Robert Bartlett attempted to bring to light the underlying forces at play. He saw the mass emigrations of the High Middle Ages as an effect of acute demographic pressure in what were then the core territories of Europe. The die of demography was cast: there was an aristocratic population surplus; noble boys were bereft of inherited land and had to seek their fortunes elsewhere, plow new ground.

And thus began the conquest operations: the founding of new societies and cities, missionary activities, and the spread of technology. The last pockets of heathenism in Europe (Lithuania!) were Christianized. Knightly orders and an early form of commercial capitalism (the Hanseatic League!) integrated the peripheries with the centers, of which there were many when imperial power was chiefly an ideological construction. This empire was Roman, but only in name – later apostolic, but again mainly titular.

THE TRADE FLOWS in the Baltic Sea region and hinterlands came to comprise mainly furs at first, later timber, and as we approach the days of our great-grandfathers, grain became an important export commodity from east to west – from the fertile land of a still barely industrialized Russia (but where early investments were made in expanding the railways to create good transportation routes for commodity distribution) to a Western Europe where rapid depopulation of rural areas had begun and the industrial proletariat needed their cheap daily bread, except, of course, all those who sailed across the Atlantic – to become pioneers, colonists!

It is odd that the westward expansion of Europe is so seldom discussed in colonial terms – after the armed uprisings of the colonies against the British crown in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. For thereafter, the conquest of land and the hunting down of the native inhabitants continued. The Zionist colonization project in Palestine also took land, swept away people, eradicated the memory of an earlier culture.

COLONIALISM IS PERHAPS not a European specialty, and it cannot be equated with empire-building. Empires can make conquests without changing all that much of the demographic, ethnic, religious, or linguistic structure in conquered territories. Are not the Otto-

man and Habsburg empires good illustrations in that respect? Moving people on a mass scale is a costly business; it is preferable, at least from an economic standpoint, to collect taxes and tributes by other means if possible.

But economies differ and scale also matters. When Russia, in the final days of the Rurik Dynasty, began to conquer the lands beyond the Urals, skins and hides filled the coffers of the rulers, but the territories were so vast that relocation of people became necessary to pacify these settlements, collect the financial profits of exploitation – plunder masquerading as trade – and make sure the wealth was not spread too liberally in the country, which would create a base for competing power centers. (This is something which perhaps bears comparison to the commodities-based state-monopolistic capitalism of today.)

THE MISSION THIS time could be perceived as civilizational, and Mark Bassin has compared the pioneer mentality with that which prevailed at the North American border to the west, towards the Pacific Ocean, a few centuries later. As Alexander Etkind argues in a new book, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge 2011: Polity), colonization became a good argument in favor of serfdom, for keeping the peasants in the Russian core territory, and for exile to Siberia to stymie political opposition. Genocide took place there.

But mightn't colonization also be the rescue of the small nation in times of social and economic distress? In the Scandinavian border states, the Sami were pushed aside and lost ancient grazing rights up until relatively recent times. And the Inuit are still being squeezed. Totalitarian ideologies are probably no requirement in dealing with undesirable situations – or people. ✕

The next issue of BW is scheduled to be published in March 2013.

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More information at [www.balticworlds.com](http://www.balticworlds.com).

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# CALL OF THE WILD

by **Pontus Reimers** illustration **Moa Thelander**

**E**ver since systematic agriculture began in eastern Turkey around eleven thousand years ago, farmers and livestock keepers have had an antagonistic relationship to wild animals in general and predators in particular – a clash reflected in countless myths, legends, and fables, many of which survive in modern versions. Of northern hemisphere predators, the wolf has been ascribed a special position as a killer and the embodiment of evil. In our time, balanced wildlife conservation has helped secure the predator's population in the Baltic Sea region, but not without friction between town and country.

**They're hunting wolves! The hunt is on, pursuing  
The wily predators, the she-wolf and her brood.  
The beaters shout, the dogs bay, almost spewing.  
The flags on the snow are red, as red as the blood.**

**We are swift and our jaws are rapacious.  
Why then, chief, like a tribe that's oppressed,  
Must we rush towards the weapons that face us  
And that precept be never transgressed?**

From "Wolf Hunt", a song by Vladimir Vysotsky.  
Translation by Kathryn and Bruce Hamilton, 1987.

We have become tame in Europe, and that is a good thing. Europeans are on the whole no longer wild or savage, as we certainly were a thousand, five hundred, or for that matter sixty-seven years ago. The potential for savagery and bloodthirstiness remains within us, as shown with such dreadful clarity during the war in the former Yugoslavia in 1991–1999. But we are for

the most part tame and prefer that state-sanctioned bloodletting on a large scale happen outside the borders of the European Union. And that is, all things considered, a good thing. No one in their right mind would want to go back to the fear and insecurity of anticipated attacks by Vikings, bigoted religious fanatics, or the soldiers of the Axis Powers. The same can be said about our relationship to animals. Most aspects of the living conditions of pets and farm animals are regulated by law in the EU. For wild animals, there are special habitat directives.

No one, at least not publicly, wants to see the return of stallion baiting, dog and bear-baiting, or the use of horses in war (still common in World War II). The consequences of the use of dolphins during the Cold War by the Eastern and Western powers are one exception. The Russian military is now rumored to have sold its dolphin program to Iran; the Americans have retained theirs, but deny anti-personnel use, that is, that dolphins are trained to attack people. Perhaps the "clash of civilizations" will be fought by dolphins standing in for people in the Persian Gulf – presuming this has not already occurred.

But something has been lost in the advance of civilization. In pace with the introduction of the refrigerator, hot running water, bathrooms with subfloor heating, and cable TV, our relationship to things wild has changed, especially our attitudes towards the predators among us. The bear, the wolf, the wolverine, the lynx: all have been transformed in our minds into symbolic, anthropomorphized abstractions. It is human nature to do so, and in a way, one could argue that this has been the case for much longer than since the end of World War II. Nevertheless, the already sim-

plified traits have become more starkly black and white in modern, highly urbanized societies. The bear +, the wolf -, the lynx +, the wolverine -. The bear is strong, the wolf vicious, the lynx beautiful, the wolverine ugly and cruel. And that is that.

**OUT IN THE COUNTRY**, that argument does not hold full sway, at least not in the areas where the predators are actually found. Country people's empirical knowledge runs deeper and is often – though not always – more complex and objective than city people's. The problem with European attitudes towards "our" predators, however, is that most Europeans live in cities and not in the countryside. In Scandinavia and other countries around the Baltic, the ratio of urban to rural populations is now two to one or more. This is no longer a strictly European, or even Western, state of affairs. According to the UN World Urbanization Prospects, which are revised every two years, a majority of the total population has been urban for several years now. According to UN estimates, the world population is expected to be 67 percent urban in 2050.

Yet another predator complication: wolverines and lynx do not attack adult humans (at least as long as you do not try to lift and carry them, and good luck with that!). Bears and wolves can indeed be lethal, but the way both animals are generally portrayed in the media does not align with how dangerous they really are. According to all available statistics from the last two hundred years, the bear poses far and away the greatest danger to humans of all wild animals in the northern hemisphere. Wolves, which ordinarily shy away from human contact, are most likely to attack during times of famine or war, or when they have become ac-



customed to the presence of humans, such as in zoos or other private settings. Children unaccompanied by adults, however, are not safe among wolves under any circumstances. According to the Swedish Wildlife Damage Center, there were 3,221 bears in Sweden in 2008, while the wolf population was estimated to be about one tenth of that.

**STOCKHOLM IS A GREEN CITY** and its proximity to nature is still extraordinary, as exemplified by its national urban park. Even though I live in the heart of the city center, I regularly see wild mammals: hares are common and I once met a roe deer on the morning walk to the daycare center; a year ago, a moose was swimming in the lake just outside my neighborhood. Wolves have lived in the area for centuries. In 1689, the seven-year-old Crown Prince Charles (the future Charles XII, the victor at Narva and the loser at Poltava) participated in a successful wolf hunt at Lappkärrsberget in the northern part of Djurgården, an event he immortalized in a drawing preserved to this day. The wolf population declined drastically in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and by the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Stockholmers hardly had to spare them a thought. It thus caused an uproar in 2001 when a wolf took his evening constitutional right through the center of town. In 2008, another wolf was seen roaming the eastern suburbs. The wild had made its presence felt once more.

## BALTIC OVERVIEW

The wolf had been exterminated in Denmark since 1813, but sightings of a single individual were reported in 2009 and 2010 in Sønderjylland, probably after it had crossed the border with Germany, where the last wolf was shot in 1904 in Lausitz. Wolves were rediscovered in the same area, which borders on Poland, in 1998. The German population currently stands at

about 35 individuals, divided among four packs. Cubs were discovered in Niedersachsen in July of this year. Wolves are a protected species in Germany.

So are to the 700–800 wolves in Poland, excepting those that live in Bieszczady in the southeast. The majority of the 2,000 wolves in Ukraine seem to have concentrated themselves in the exclusion zone north of Chernobyl. Nearly as many wolves, somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000, are found in Belarus. An estimated 300–400 wolves are found in Lithuania, about 600 in Latvia, and about 200 in Estonia (a steep decline from the wolf population of about 500 in the 1990s). Estonia is the only country east of the Baltic Sea other than Finland that pays compensation to livestock owners victimized by ravaging wolves.

Even though the “domestic” wolves in Finland have never been eradicated and despite the proximity to the Russian wolf population – about 30,000 strong – Finland has experienced some problems with the estimated 116 to 123 wolves found in its territory in 2007/2008. As in Sweden, the wolf presence causes controversy between “wolf haters” and “wolf huggers”. In addition, there is an ongoing “hopelessness debate” concerning EU regulations, which many affected people in wolf habitat areas feel is insensitive and high-handed.

An estimated 230–300 wolves live in Sweden and Norway (the countries “share” part of the population and so are counted together) although the Wildlife Damage Center’s preliminary report for 2011/2012 may indicate that the number is closer to 400.

The wolf is not an endangered species (an estimated 60,000–70,000 are found in Canada and Alaska alone). But in several countries, its right to exist is a highly controversial issue, especially in Fennoscandia, it seems. Linda Laikre, a professor at the Population Genetics division of the Department of Zoology at Stockholm University, is a member of the Swedish gov-

ernment’s Scientific Council on Biodiversity. In a radio interview in March 2012, Professor Laikre said that the wolf populations not only in Norway and Sweden but also in Finland need to be connected and should number between 3,000 and 5,000 individuals – far more than the current populations.

## HUNTERS AND FARMERS

The facts of the case are relatively well-known, based on research findings. Long ago, when we all lived in the woods, or on the plains, we cooperated with wolves in the hunt for life-sustaining proteins. This proved advantageous to both species. Over the centuries and the millennia, this symbiotic existence came to shape not only the relationship between humans and wolves, but also the physical form of the latter: the wolves who maintained close interaction with humans became semi-tame and were ultimately bred under controlled conditions in order to accentuate certain genetic traits and suppress others. And so arose our endless variety of tame dog breeds. Or at least we believe it went something like that. The close cooperation between nomads and wolves was reflected in relatively recent human history by the Greek historian Herodotus in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Although he himself puts no faith in the rumor, Herodotus mentions that the Neuri people, who lived beyond the Scythian area near the Hypanis River (identified as the Southern Bug in present-day Ukraine), were transformed into wolves for a period every year.

The world’s oldest known monumental construction is a complex of stone structures in concentric rings raised at a site called Göbekli Tepe in southeastern Anatolia. The age of the complex, dated at about 9000 BCE, is not the only amazing thing: the stone slabs, which weigh many tons, are not crude and unworked; on the contrary, they are evenly quarried. As if that were not enough, reliefs are carved into the slabs of the predatory animals that existed in the area when the complex came about. Not only that: in addition to the reliefs, certain depictions of animals are sculpted three-dimensionally in high relief. And all of this was done without metal tools. Excavator Klaus Schmidt has identified one of the most prominent predators as a fox, but he notes that it might just as easily be a wolf (or a jackal) – or a dog. One of the most interesting things about the site is that it is the first time we see a differentiation between the wild and the tame, between culture and nature, between hunters and farmers; by extension, we also see the division between town and country, for at the same time, it seems that the cultivation of wild wheat began on the nearby Mount Karaca Dağ, which has been genetically indicated as the origin of all domesticated wheat. We do not know why the people who erected the complex chose to depict their wild surroundings, only that they were forced to relate to it. And so are we, eleven thousand years later. Modern Turkey, by the way, is home to an estimated 7,000 wolves. There were surely more back then.

A typical, or perhaps more accurately archetypal, modern dog breed is the German Shepherd, which is to many a symbol of faithfulness and security in relation to humans, but also of threat and danger to life and limb by reason of the widespread use of German





Shepherds as police and military dogs in the 20th century. Despite its wolf-like appearance, the German Shepherd is not an ancient breed; it was first introduced in 1899 by the German breeder Max von Stephanitz. There is some information to indicate that wolves contributed to the first generations of German Shepherds. Partly as a consequence of its colossal popularity, the breed has developed a number of problems, ranging from hip dysplasia to increased tendencies towards bite aggression. And they are very good at biting, indeed. In at least one “bite test”, the German Shepherd was one of the three breeds that bit the hardest (the others were a Rottweiler and a Pit Bull Terrier). Although it is difficult to measure the real bite strength of wild animals, some scientific studies have been undertaken and the wolf, on the other hand, is said to bite twice as hard as the German Shepherd, hard enough to break bone. The wolf can easily kill a human. But how often does it do so in reality?

**THE NORWEGIAN WILDLIFE** ecologist John Linnell has been able to document 94 deaths caused by wolves in Fennoscandia, all of them before 1882. Since many of the attacks happened in backward rural areas, and since the majority of the victims were children, women, or elderly people, one conclusion of the documentation might be that wolves, or for that matter any predatory animals, should not be habituated to living near people. In the interests of public safety, wolves must thus be taught that people should be avoided in general, because they may be armed. In addition: 19 deaths caused by wolves have been reported from North America, Central Asia, and Russia during the 21st century alone. Naturally, you cannot stop people who are passionately interested in wolves, such as the French concert pianist Hélène Grimaud, from approaching the animals. But it should reasonably occur, as in her case, in a private context.

For many Westerners, the wolf is the most polarizing of animals, a confrontation before which the rational tradition of Enlightenment must give way. To this day, the wolf is often either called upon to symbolize pure evil and the deadly sins of gluttony, greed, and wrath, or else its rights are asserted so emphatically that innocent people suffer. Since 2012, there has been what is described as a “single-issue party” in Sweden known as the Nature Democrats. The party’s slogan is “for a living countryside”, which should be equated with zero tolerance for wolves in Sweden. The party justifies its position on the grounds that the wolf is not found in its natural distribution area (because it is in-bred), which is why the party also rejects the EU Habitat Directive. There are thus many parameters to manage here: hunters’ eagerness to bring down an animal seen as both a pest and an alluring quarry; hunters’ fully understandable anger and grief over dogs killed by wolves (19 in 2010, 24 in 2011, and 8 so far in 2012; statistics provided on the Swedish Hunting Association’s website, often accompanied by heart-rending “crime scene” pictures); the local population’s more



Relief of the twins Romulus and Remus with the Capitoline Wolf, dated to the reign of Emperor Trajan (97–117 AD).



Monolith with relief of canines in Göbekli Tepe from about 9000 BC.

Photos: Wikimedia Commons

or less well-founded fear of predators, and an irrational hatred that contains elements of both superstition and resistance to the governing powers in Stockholm or Brussels.

These circumstances most certainly contributed to the Swedish government’s announcement in 2010 that it would allow licensed “preventive hunting” of its dwindling wolf population the following year, a measure that led to the following statement from European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potočnik on January 7, 2011:

**Several aspects of the Swedish wolf policy raise serious questions, for example: the unfavorable conservation status of the Swedish wolf population; the set ceiling for the number of wolves in Sweden; the licensed hunting of a strictly protected species without fulfilling the specific conditions for derogations set out by EU law; the reduced distribution area for wolves; the fact that the licensed hunting occurs before the announced introduction of wolves to improve the genetic status has taken place; the erroneous multi-annual practice that repeated licensed hunting may lead to.**

**THE PREVENTIVE HUNT** was cancelled in 2012 in response to the threat of being hauled up before the European Court of Justice, but the word is that it may be resumed in 2013 (though this has recently been contested by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency). If the situation was not embarrassing as well as distasteful, one might say that the Swedish government is “caught in a wolf trap”. Attitudes, as we all know, are hard to decree from above. In a paper on the fear of predatory animals published by the SOM Institute (Society, Opinion, Media) at the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, the authors write:

**[T]he tendency is that the proportion of people who live in purely rural areas and who think the wolf population is too large has in-**

**creased rather than decreased (from 44 to 48 percent, not significant). 2. The corresponding figure for people who live in one of our three large cities is 16 percent (15 percent in 2009). Nor is the increase in the proportion of urban-dwellers who think the wolf population is at the right level (from 28 to 37 percent) significant. These attitudinal differences between urban and rural populations are also confirmed by other studies, where the results over time indicate stable or increasing differences in urban and rural attitudes towards predatory animals.**

Even though wolves are said to be among the most thoroughly studied of all mammals, there is still new knowledge about them to be gained. To take but one example: the American wildlife researcher David Mech was involved in introducing the term “alpha male” in the 1970s. These days, he and most others along with him have abandoned the concept because the division of the wolf pack is no longer considered as strictly hierarchical as it once was. The preferred term is now “breeding male”. The term “alpha” is reserved for very large packs with several pregnant females.

To digress only slightly: if there are no longer alpha males in the wild, should we not perhaps also abolish the term in business and sports contexts?

## THE PROUD PARTISANS OF THE WOLVES

The constant companions of the chief Old Norse god Odin may have been a wolf pair, Gere (“greedy”) and Freke (“aggressive”), but there is no exaggerated love for wolves to be found in Old Norse mythology, based as it is on the presence of settled farmers. The “wolf-time” in *Völuspá* refers to misfortune, war, and destruction when the wolf Fenrir and the giant wolfhound Garm burst their fetters in preparation for Ragnarök. Nay, over the ages, wolves have been appreciated and respected by nomads and mountain people, by



the ancient Italic Sabines, by some Native American peoples, by prehistoric Mongolians and Turkish-speaking peoples, and by the Chechens: in Chechen mythology, the founder of the nation Turpalo-Noxchuo was, like Mowgli, raised by a she-wolf. The best known Western wolf myth is naturally the story of the founding of Rome, in which the abandoned twins Romulus and Remus were raised by a she-wolf until a human took them in hand. In sculptural form, this she-wolf was for centuries one of the most important field signs of the Roman Army and is still today a symbol of the city itself.

Wolf legends have not infrequently given rise to ultra-nationalist reflections of a predatory nature in our own time – in Turkey, for example, in the form of the Gray Wolves, a right-wing extremist youth organization and the much-debated underground power network *Ergenekon* (the name refers to a legendary valley from which a wolf helped the first Turks to escape). Another manifestation has its origins in Lithuania. Sometime in the summer of 1320, the Grand Duke Gediminas was out hunting in the woods near the confluence of the Vilnia and Neris rivers. As he slept under the stars that night, he had a peculiar dream: a wolf in armor, or perhaps a wolf made of iron, stood on a hill and howled. When the next morning he asked a high priest who lived nearby to interpret the dream, the priest answered that the wolf symbolized a fortress that would protect the country from foreign invasion and exhorted the Grand Duke to build such a fortress on that very place. And so, according to legend, the city of Vilnius came to be. Whatever the truth of that might be, the legend of the iron wolf survived. The Lithuanian fascist movement founded in 1927 was named The Iron Wolf (*Geležinis Vilkas*). The organization was officially banned in 1930 but survived for the rest of the decade. Today, people have managed to defuse the name of its extremist past in favor of its nationalist connotations. The motorized brigade that is the most important unit of the Lithuanian armed forces is now called The Iron Wolves.

## THE WOLF YOU FEED

An oft-told Cherokee legend is the story of an old man and a boy. The man explains that human nature is like a fight between two wolves: one is honorable and just, the other hateful and violent. The boy asks which wolf will win, and the old man answers: “The one you feed.”

The film industry loves good animal stories because they are big box office. Since animals are our anthropomorphic representatives, these “animal movies” can be categorized into genres in the same way as ordinary feature films: drama (*Lassie*), family comedy (*Beethoven*), horror (*Jaws*), etc. Bears were depicted brutally and semi-realistically in the 1988 French film *Lours* and as inordinately monstrous in *The Edge* (1997). Both of these wilderness dramas featured the trained Kodiak, Bart the Bear, in a leading role.

Wolves in film have appeared mainly in the supernatural genre, that is, in the guise of werewolves.



Boar hunting in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

One exception is the French *Le pacte des loups*, which in a ludicrous yet entertaining way tells the story of a true historical episode involving wolves – that of the ravages of the Beast of Gévaudan in southern France in the 1760s, in which more than a hundred people are said to have been killed. An attempt to depict wolves in the modern wild was made in the existential wilderness drama *The Grey* in 2011. The wolves in the film, which are presumed to be “normal” and not rabid, immediately and mercilessly hunt the survivors of a plane crash, a plot that triggered protests by nature conservation organizations. Matters were not helped when it was revealed that the director had purchased four wolf cadavers from a trapper, two to use as props and two for the cast to eat (to get into survival mode, I suppose). The pattern repeats itself in the action flick *The Bourne Legacy* (2012), in which a wolf pack about to gorge itself on lamb catches sight of the movie’s secret agent hero, whereupon, of course, the pack instantly and relentlessly begins to hunt him.

One of the few examples of films, other than *The Jungle Book*, in which wolves are portrayed in a favorable light is *Game of Thrones*, HBO’s successful television series based on George R. R. Martin’s massive fantasy book series. In *Game of Thrones*, “direwolves” – based on a real wolf species that died out in North and South America ten thousand years ago, by the way – feature as companions and protectors of several children of the House Stark, the closest the story comes to a conventional “good” side. (As a matter of curiosity, there are attempts under way to “recreate” the prehistoric dire wolves. The breed is currently called the American Alsatian.) In the novels and the television series, one of the “bad guys” is a wild boar, which kills King Robert in the drama and thus triggers an immediate and ruthless struggle for the throne.

*Game of Thrones* aside, the dangerousness of the wild boar is not a literary invention.

## THE PACT OF THE WILD BOARS

In the Middle Ages, the wild boar was considered one of the riskiest game animals, reflected in chroniclers’ stories of hunting accidents with lethal outcomes. In addition to their sharp tusks, wild boars use their extremely thick skull as a weapon and when they run, they can quickly reach a speed of 45 km an hour. Rather than the spears of the past, modern boar hunters use single-bore shotguns loaded with slugs and Brenneke cartridges – some of the heaviest ammunition permitted for hunting weapons. The biggest problem with wild boar is the destruction they cause, which is not particularly selective: like us and tame swine, they are omnivores. During the postwar era, the wild boar’s lack of natural enemies led to problematically strong growth of the population in Germany. They

are now an established element of the urban fauna in Berlin and the surrounding suburbs. A climax was reached in October 2008 when one man was killed and another injured in a hunt that went terribly wrong in the southern suburbs. Thereafter, the city appointed licensed hunters to reduce the population, which proved easier said than done. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, *Stadthjäger* Matthias Eggert said: “There is no way that hunting can get rid of them all. Ultimately we must learn to share the city with the swine.”

In Great Britain, where the wild boar has been scarce as hen’s teeth since the days of the Civil War, there are now between 500 and 1,000 animals. They are hard to count but quick to reproduce, and opinions that they should be contained are already being voiced. They were also exterminated in Sweden by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but escapees from enclosures in 1942 and afterwards resulted in the emergence of a vigorous population and their “domiciliary rights” were established by parliamentary decision in 1987. The Swedish Board of Agriculture reported that wild boars caused more than 17 million Swedish kronor in damage in 2009 – in the province of Södermanland alone. A pilot project in which wild boars were trapped was begun in 2011, run by the Swedish National Veterinary Institute, but the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has not yet completed its report of the outcome and any follow-up measures. One estimate of the Swedish wild boar population in 2010 arrived at a figure of about 150,000 animals. There is no reversal of the trend in sight: the population is growing steadily. Other sources cite twice that number, or about 300,000 animals.

In a post on the Swedish Hunting Association’s blog about the incident at Kolmården Zoo on June 17, 2012 when a zookeeper was killed by “her” wolves, Gunnar Glöerson, the association’s officer

in charge of predator issues, wrote that “this is going to happen with our wild wolves, too. The only question is when and whether we can reduce the risk. The solution is simple. Hunt them!” The likelihood that people may also be injured or killed in encounters with wild boar cannot be ignored, however, and is not necessarily lower, considering the explosive growth of the population. The primary killer of wild boars in the natural food chain is actually the wolf, except in East Asia, where boars are the prey of tigers and leopards.

We do not have to have wolves in Sweden. We do not have to have predatory animals at all. We can exterminate them again; in the wolves’ case, it would probably be relatively easy. If nothing else, they will die out within the foreseeable future due to inbreeding. In the majority of the countries around the Baltic, maintaining a functioning wolf population seems to be accepted. In some cases, the reading of population reports gives one a distinct impression that the wolf is actually a welcome part of the fauna; that while it is not always easy to defend the introduction of predators in livestock farming areas, it can be done.

**AND SUCH IS** the case in other parts of the world. When Vilhelm Moberg’s fictional characters Karl-Oskar and Kristina emigrated from Sweden, they left a country where there were no wolves for a country where the creatures still roamed. In Minnesota, the most markedly Swedish settlement in the United States (with an area of 225,365 sq km compared to Sweden’s 528,446 sq km), there were 300 wolves in the 1970s. Today, there are about 3,000, more than in any other state except Alaska. In January 2012, the state government approved the start of a protective wolf hunting season, with a goal of shooting 400 wolves in 2012 and a long-term reduction of the population to 1,500 animals. If the 5.5 million inhabitants of Minnesota, a state containing a great deal of agricultural and industrial land, can accept so many wolves in their territory, why should a country like Sweden not have room for the estimated one thousand or so wolves that it would have had if illegal hunting were not so zealous? Compared to 150,000 to 300,000 wild boars and 300,000 to 400,000 moose?

It seems hardly possible to reestablish the Stone Age “contract” between humankind and wolves, nor would it be desirable in our increasingly urbanized world. But could allowing the wolves to help manage the moose and the wild boars, to a greater extent than now occurs, perhaps be seen as a move towards reestablishing the balance of nature?

## CODA

I am in Belgrade over the Christmas and New Year season of 2002/2003. In the zoological gardens in the middle of the city, the weak winter sun is beginning to set and a strange half-light spreads out among the cages. Zoos are not my cup of tea, but the children like it. The situation in the city is still tense after the NATO bombings of 1999 and there are occasional rapid deployments to search for Milosević and Mladić. The Zemun district is under mafia control and the portraits of the wanted men are hung on pub walls like pictures of movie stars, to which the recalcitrant patrons raise their glasses of rakia while gleaming BMWs wait out-

side. In less than three months, the pro-Western Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić, an old student of Jürgen Habermas, would be shot to death in the street. But the five wolves in front of me care nothing for politics. They huddle together before my feet and they sing. Only a thin fence separates us. The moon glows. The wolves howl melodically. Why? Are they trying to communicate with other wolves, perhaps on the outskirts of the city? I do not, cannot know. But the sound is ineffably melancholic and I am overcome with reverence for this wild and dignified concert. The wolves do not care. They are not interested in me, but only in freedom. Being an old gray wolf myself, I do not find it hard to sympathize.

**There is a wolf in me ... fangs for tearing gashes ... a red tongue for raw meat ... and the hot lapping of blood – I keep the wolf because the wilderness gave it to me and the wilderness will not let it go.**

\*\*\*

**Oh, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie inside my ribs, under my bony skull, under my red-valved heart – and I got something else: it is a man-child heart, a woman-child heart: it is a father and a mother and a lover: it came from God knows where; it is going to God knows where – For I am the keeper of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from the wilderness.**

From “Wilderness”, by Carl Sandburg.

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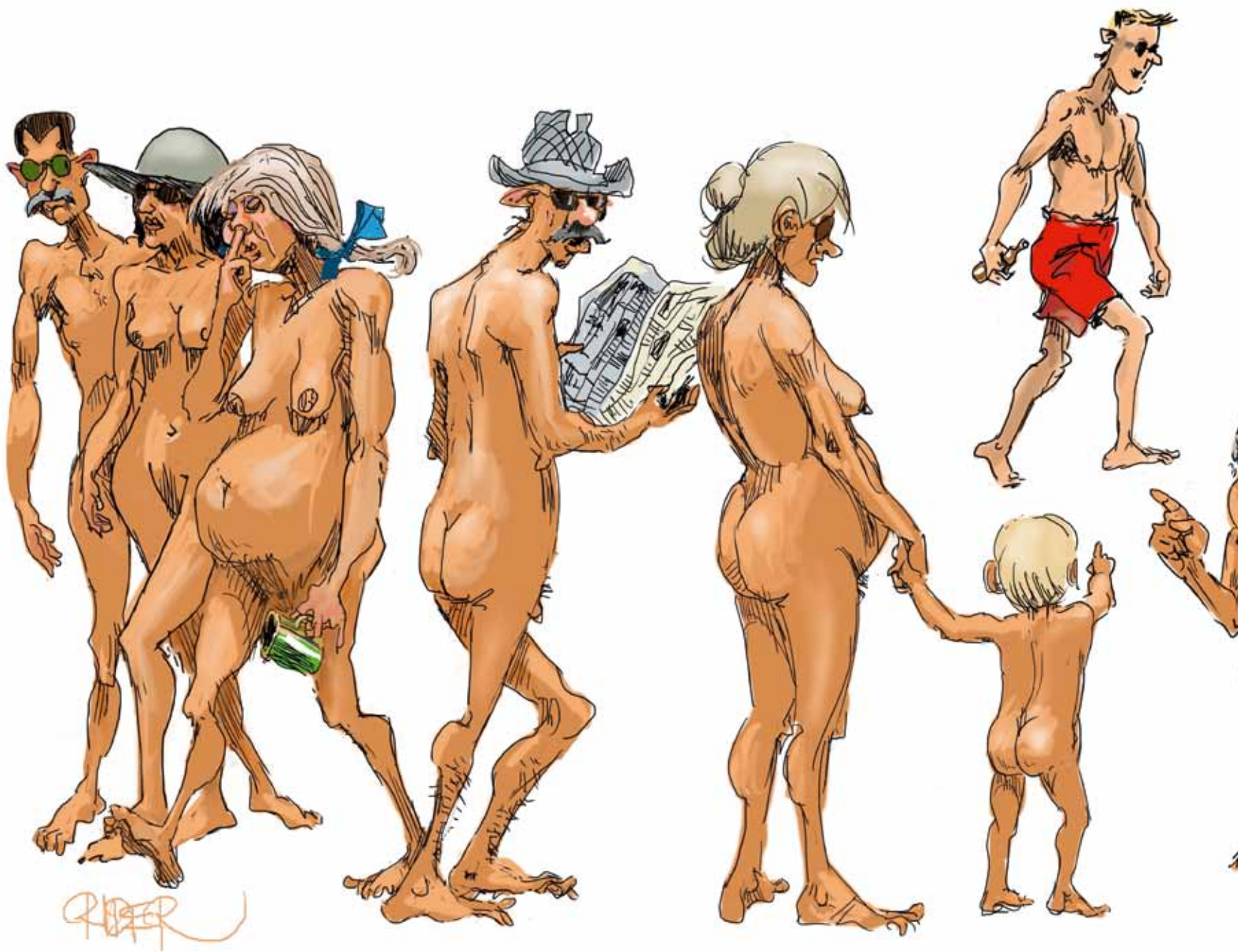
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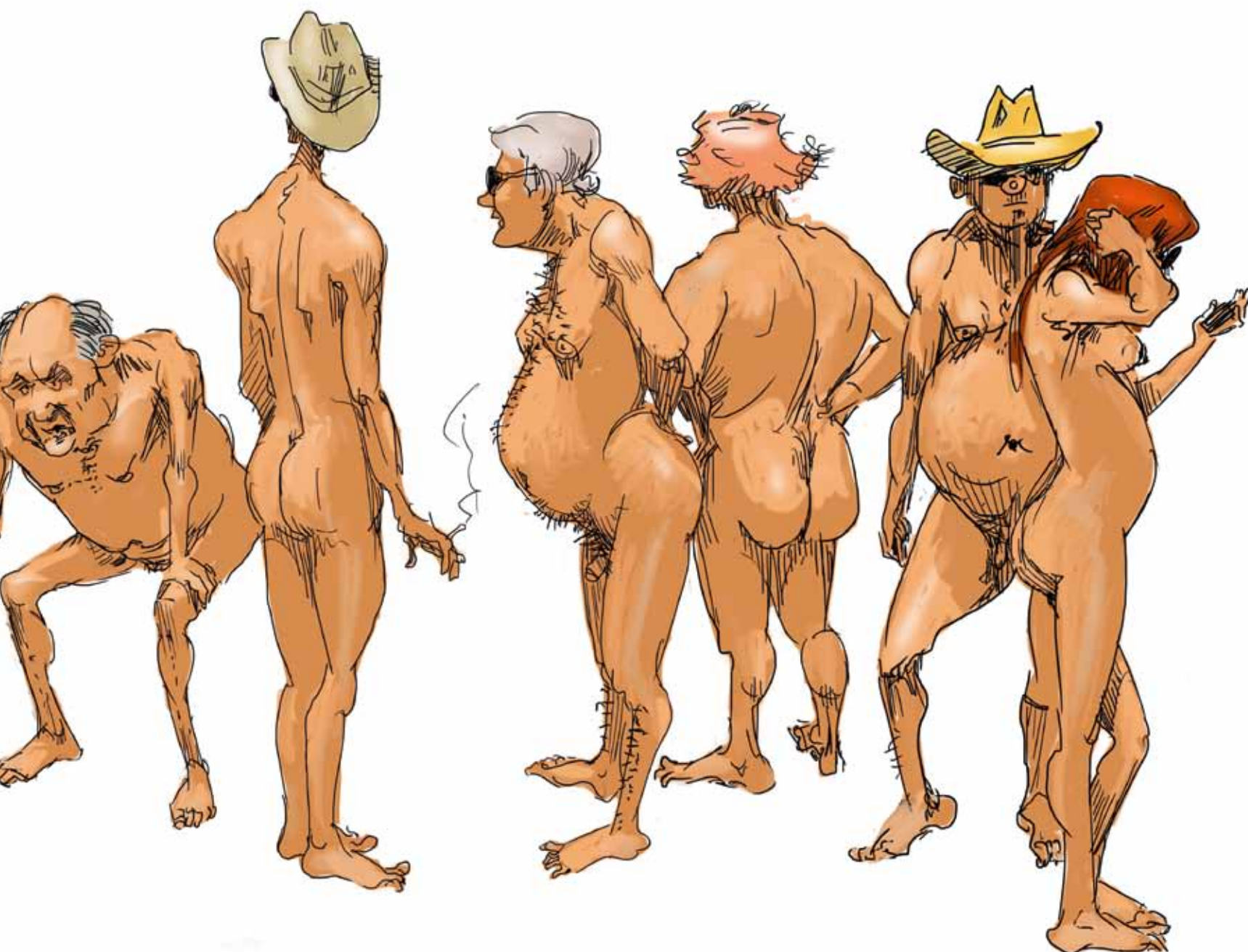
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by **Andrei Pleșu** illustration **Riber Hansson**

# TOLERANCE AND THE INTOLERABLE



**A FEW YEARS AGO** at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, I heard an Indian jurist's lecture on human rights. He approached the theme, unsurprisingly, from the viewpoint of Hindu tradition. Overall, his interest was in tying the concept of rights to that of obligations, and in defining *dharma*, a concept alien to the conventions of European culture. Individual duty is determined in the Hindu context not by the demands of others, of institutions, or of immanent laws, but on the basis of *dharma*, a cosmic order in which every entity must take part if it is not to invalidate itself. While listening to the lecture, I remembered an earlier colloquium on the same theme, this one organized by the Arab countries. The colloquium ended with the assertion that one cannot speak of human rights without constantly invoking "the rights of Allah". Europeans present at both lectures were clearly taken by surprise and avoided any reaction. They were familiar with what we may call the *vulgata* of human rights, but they knew little or nothing about other civilizations and cultures. What they

had just learned from the Indian professor did not fit with their accustomed concept at all. The Europeans present had different opinions born of a philosophy in which metaphysics in the traditional sense and theology no longer have any weight. But their natural impulse to discuss the problem was hindered by several principles that in recent decades have come to be viewed as inviolable: respect for the right to difference, and tolerance toward other people's opinions.

The following thoughts originate in my desire to understand this suspension of dialogue and to draw attention to the crisis of the concept of tolerance. Tolerance has become a commonplace of civilized behavior and, like every commonplace, has come to be accepted blindly and indiscriminately.

It seems that, although we live in a world of globalization in which spatial and cultural distances are shrinking palpably, this does not rule out ignorance about the intellectual and social foundations of the other; on the contrary, it increases the irrational aspect of this ignorance. One can reach Bangkok

relatively quickly, one can maintain political or trade relations with Bangkok, and one can do all of this without epistemologically leaving the picturesque scenery of the tourist's world. Paradoxically, globalization is inversely proportionate with general knowledge. The easier it is to encounter each other, the less we know each other.

**A SECOND REMARK IS** that ignorance does not preclude cordiality. One can have good relations with other people while knowing nothing about their cultural background. At first glance, this seems a gain for civilization: communication is possible even in the absence of knowledge. But can there be genuine communication under such conditions? Or is it simply "etiquette", a pleasant surface choreography? Basically, we are experiencing a substantial change in the concept of "tolerance". The term no longer denotes the *acceptance* of "being different" or holding a different opinion, but simply a friendly and well-intentioned *ignoring* of the other opinion,



the elimination of difference *as difference*. The results of this are (A) I need not understand you to accept you, and (B) I need not discuss your views with you before assuming you are in the right. In other words, I agree – in principle – with what I don't understand, and I agree in principle with what I may not agree with. You have a right to your opinion; I respect your opinion. I have a right to my opinion and expect that it be respected. Dialectic is unnecessary. This mutual tolerance ends in a universal, peaceful, confidently smiling silence – a silence in which dialogue can only be an undesirable disturbance.

**UNDER THESE CONDITIONS**, the effects of tolerance are more than questionable. It curtails our pleasure in knowledge and in genuine understanding of difference, and it undermines the desire for debate. Why bother, when the result must consist in a mutual affirmation of each other's right anyway? In a world governed by such rules, Socrates would have been unemployed. There is no truth to be found, and no chain of proof is needed. All that is asked of us is that we *politely* respect our interlocutor's convictions.

This unquestioned call for tolerance challenges several categories that were still operational until yesterday: error, guilt, the relation of norm and exception, the principles of education, the technique of disputation, and, in general, the risky problem of the unacceptable and the intolerable. Tolerance is transformed from a pure necessity for living together well ("*L'apanage de l'humanité*", the condition of humanity, said Voltaire; "To forbear each other's foolishness is the first law of nature") into a neutral disposition, a kind of logical and axiological anesthesia, the symptom of

a cheerful inner paralysis. Being tolerant seems to mean giving up one's *sense of orientation*. Please don't condemn my concern prematurely. I'm not calling for intolerance and the cruelty of the geometrical mind. I do not want to re-establish black-and-white judgments, nor the normative sclerosis of dichotomies and the unrealistic monotony of "either/or". All I want to do is point out that there is an urgent necessity to add the discriminative faculty to tolerance, to avoid confounding respect for difference with the dissolving ethic of "anything goes".

It is generally agreed that the modern debate on tolerance begins with John Locke at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. But in reality, a concept is probably already in crisis if it becomes a topic of controversy and one feels a need to justify it theoretically and assert it publicly. (Compare for example the contemporary overuse of the "European problem".)

Against the backdrop of brutal conflicts between the various religious denominations and factions, which were incapable of living together, Locke suggested a philosophical justification of tolerance. In this context, tolerance was an antidote to the practice of persecution. Thus we should not forget that tolerance, in the European sense, was originally established with strictly *religious* connotations. (In this sense, incidentally, John Locke, the theoretician of tolerance and an outstanding proponent of the separation between civil and religious life, is not modern enough to accept tolerance toward atheists; their lack of spiritual engagement made them seem to him antisocial beings.) Extrapolating it to other fields is a difficult endeavor requiring nuance and reformulation.

But there is a self-evident component of tolerance that is part of the behavioral heritage of the human species and did not have to wait until the beginnings of the modern age to find expression. I refer primarily to *tolerance toward oneself*, which I think has an ancient tradition. Man has probably behaved in a "Christian" manner toward himself since long before the appearance of Christianity. We know our own sins all too well, we know unutterable and unavowable things about ourselves, and we often do not approve of what we ourselves do. But all in all, we regard ourselves with a great deal of sympathy – we *understand* ourselves, we *endure* ourselves, and we *forgive* ourselves. What prevails is the feeling that we are basically decent people, "good guys", righteous persons. At least, we are not as bad as we would seem and, most importantly perhaps, we are not as bad as others are.

For this reason I am tempted to assert that "Love thy neighbor as thyself" does not mean "Love others as much as you love yourself", but rather "Love others with the same forbearance with which you love yourself" and "Be just as tolerant of others' weaknesses as you are of your own." An inconsequential but telling example of the tolerance we have toward ourselves is the forbearance we usually exercise toward our own habits and idiosyncrasies. No matter how ridiculous or compulsive they may be, our idiosyncrasies are part of ourselves to such a degree that we never really consider reforming them.

**TOLERANCE ALSO SEEMS** absolutely natural when we practice it toward those close to us. Love always expresses itself, sometimes irrationally, in tolerance: we are lenient towards our children, members of our family, and some friends. We accept slip-ups and deviations from them that would appear unacceptable to us *in others*.

Basically, life within small communities is a genuine school of tolerance. In larger communities, one can isolate oneself, creating clubs based on affinities, and thus avoid contact with everything disconcerting or bothersome. But in a family, one has to accommodate the peculiarities of each member, like a fate that, in the given situation, cannot be escaped. Marriage, for example, demands a tolerant spirit to the point of sacrifice. One must come to an agreement and accustom oneself to the way one's spouse rolls up the toothpaste tube (or doesn't), to eating habits, to rhythms and idiosyncrasies that are completely alien.

But tolerance is an ordinary experience even outside of one's relationship to oneself or to people one is close to. In everyday life, what we could call the weak variant of tolerance, leniency, is widespread. You know that something is going on that is against the rules, you don't approve of it, but you overlook it. You act as if you did not perceive the offense. For example, you know that some pupils at school smoke in the bathrooms during the breaks. You know that the cleaning woman in your office filches your bonbons, that your buddy smokes your cigarettes. But you decide that it is not worth

attributing importance to such trifles. Leniency is thus the tendency to tolerate what appears *inessential*. The little sins that we – like everyone – commit or have committed in another phase of life have to be treated with leniency, covered up, forgotten. Leniency is the tolerance of grandparents who observe – without interfering – their grandchildren's pranks from the corner of their amused eyes.

Another, stronger form of tolerance is also common, if not banal: *complicity*, silent approval. You can no longer overlook the violation of the rule, but after pragmatic calculation you decide to allow it. We – at least we in Eastern Europe – know that "baksheesh" is a very unhealthy matter. We do not approve of it, but we practice it – whether out of weakness or out of strategic opportunism. We prefer to acquiesce in a bad habit than to accept the adverse effects of correcting it. It seems more profitable to stimulate prompt service or to reward the granting of favors than to give futile and senseless lessons on correctness. One lacks the courage to intervene with moralization, one decides, in accordance with the principle of the lesser evil, to take part in the transgression. The French expression for a brothel – *maison de tolérance* – is also to be understood in this sense ("Tolérance?" exclaimed a French writer, "*Mais il y a des maisons pour cela!*"). The civil decision to license a brothel, the house of tolerance, has the purpose of neutralizing a potential source of uncontrolled disorder by setting up a territory of controlled disorder, a disorder permitted as long as some rules are respected. In canon law, this is called *permissio comparativa* and is to be preferred over unconditional permission, *approbatio*.

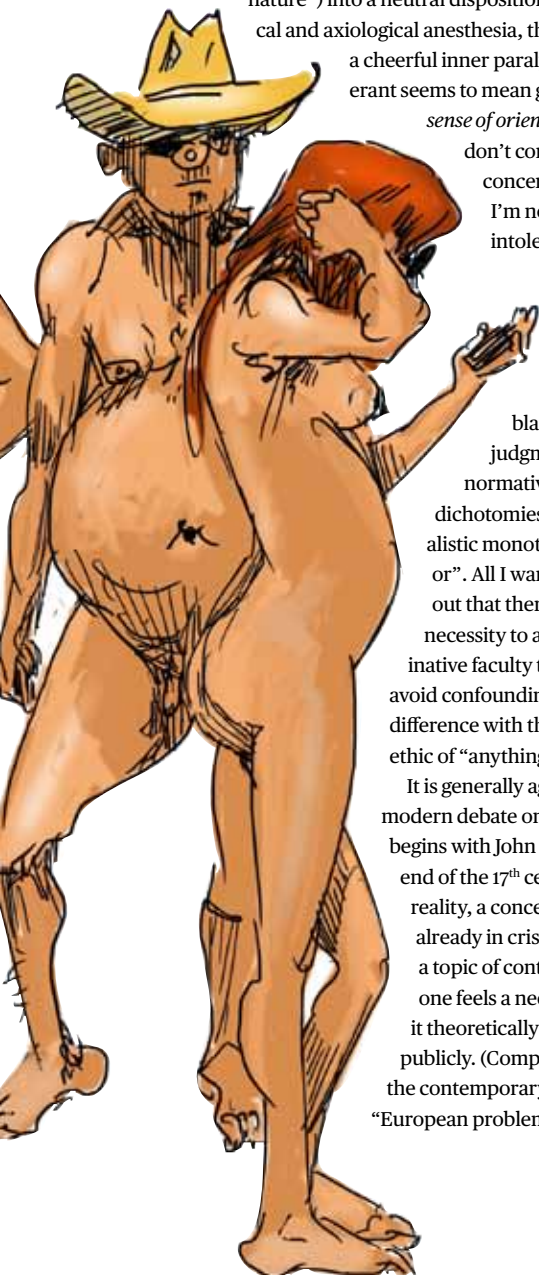
**FINALLY, ON ANOTHER LEVEL**, we sometimes have to do with a dismal species of tolerance: *resignation*. One sees the violation of a rule and one rejects it internally, but one endures it as something unavoidable. As a rule, one chooses resignation either because one does not believe the situation can be changed (hence there is no sense in trying to change it), or because, for one reason or another, one wants to keep up appearances.

In the first case, tolerance has a tinge of *discouragement* and lies close to the boundary of cowardice. The person who is terrorized by a dictatorship is slow to react not because he is tolerant of the dictatorship, but because he is intimidated by its inventory of repressive methods. In the second case, tolerance is subsumed in the rhetoric of *sanctimony* and *hypocrisy*: A husband or wife who knows about his or her spouse's betrayal accepts the situation in order to maintain conventions and thus appears to practice tolerance. But in truth he or she has merely resigned, for the sake of his or her own or the partner's image.

The situations I have enumerated thus far prove that there is an atemporal practice and problem of tolerance that is indeed, as Voltaire said, "a condition of humanity". Even where external conditions have drastically narrowed the spectrum of its manifestation, tolerance remains the minimum prerequisite for living together, the internal hygiene of a functioning group. The fact that today people speak much more and more significantly about this topic than before indicates, not a new field of reflection, but rather a deviating expansion of the concept, a change of context that brings its definition to the verge of explosion.

**BEFORE ATTEMPTING** to describe this development, I would like to briefly systematize the cases listed above:

1. Tolerance is an *epiphenomenon of communal life*. At least two different persons are required before the problem of tolerance can be posed in proper terms. The psychologization of the concept, the discourse of tolerant or intolerant



“dispositions”, of “mildness of temperament” (Calvin spoke of *mansuetudo animi*), and the definition of tolerance as an autonomous virtue, as a value “in itself”, and thus with absolute legitimacy – all of these are irrelevant, inconsequential speculations as long as there is no opportunity for a direct experiment, a social test. For Robinson Crusoe, for example, living alone on the island, the question of tolerance does not arise. I mention this merely to preclude the enthusiastic (and utopian) chatter about tolerance in general and to discourage the prattle about its angelic, altruistic magnanimity. An absolute “We have to be tolerant” means nothing. The problem is: Under what circumstances, at what moment, to what degree, and toward whom or what are we tolerant?

2. Tolerance is at issue only when one of two opposing sides can *exercise power*. In other words: only he who has the means to be intolerant can be tolerant. Tolerance is the rational decision of a coercive power to limit its coercive function and not to abuse its own power. From the viewpoint of power, tolerance is the self-imposed limitation of the right to intervene. Note that genuine power, power that has a broad basis of legitimization, is generally much more tolerant than arbitrary, illegitimate power imposed by its own authority. Dictatorships are intolerant because they feel threatened by the variety of their subjects. All variegated, colorful life threatens compulsive uniformity. Legislative inflexibility and a surfeit of regulations are symptoms of a weak organism with a limited “range of tolerance”. Strong systems, by contrast, afford themselves a much more generous margin of permissiveness. Tolerance is thus the expression of a strong political organism, a guarantee of the health of the social body. Laxity, the abandonment of standards, anarchy, value confusion, feeble institutions, and disintegrating relativism are not signs of increased tolerance, however, but symptoms of degeneration. Genuine tolerance is the antipode of weakness. One cannot be tolerant on behalf of a colorless facelessness, one cannot permit otherness when one has no identity oneself. One cannot permit *everything* simply because one does not believe in *anything*.

In brief, one cannot efficiently serve pluralism by resorting to an anemic facelessness. Tolerance is the attention that the majority grants to each minority, the understanding that the strong show for the weak, and the wisdom of the norm not to enforce itself by power and coercion. In a world where the principle of equality had won final victory, the ethic of tolerance would be obsolete, just as it would be in a world of universally accepted freedom of religion. Tolerance is the virtue of the stronger party in living together with a counterpart that is disadvantaged in one way or another. Without this structural separation, there can be no real tolerance, but only a kindhearted exchange of politenesses. It is a sign of a certain social pathology when a minority declares itself “tolerant” of a majority, when the exception tolerates the rule. As if the rabbit would declare itself tolerant of the elephant.

3. From the viewpoint of society, tolerance is the acceptable solution of a *disagreement*. I choose non-discriminatory behavior in relation to a situation that I could oppose with arguments. Mere agreement with the other cannot be termed tolerance; it is merely a form of consensus. The word “tolerance” is used accurately and fittingly only if the tolerated object retains a negative connotation. For instance, the expression “I am tolerant toward beautiful women” is absurd, unless it comes from a misogynist for whom beautiful women is a damnable category. You cannot be tolerant toward an idea or fact that you affirm and accept unconditionally. You cannot tolerate what you are in complete harmony with. There must be a mental reservation, a difference of opinion, a determination of *critical* difference between the one tolerating

## “YOU KNOW THAT SOMETHING IS GOING ON THAT IS AGAINST THE RULES, YOU DON’T APPROVE OF IT, BUT YOU OVERLOOK IT.”

and the tolerated object. Tolerance is the tendency – or the decision – to accept things that, by your own criteria, would be defined as unacceptable. Tolerance is shaking hands with what actually disconcerts and even exasperates.

**ALL OF THESE REMARKS** lead to the conclusion that tolerance is a suitable and advisable behavior, but only because the world is imperfect. Tolerance has its place primarily in the environment of differences that are difficult to resolve, of political and social inequalities, of tension between good and evil. Tolerance demands that discernment show flexibility and that judgment refrain from imposing penalties. Not *excluding* that which does not *include* oneself; allowing the other to be different and even, within limits, to err; accommodating the unsystematizable diversity of opinions, convictions, and customs; not replacing conviction with coercion and extortion – these are the demands of tolerance, this is its virtue in the unfortunately impure ambience of everyday public life. In Paradise, tolerance has neither sense nor value. It is a transitory virtue, a transitional maneuver adapted to the promiscuity of the world. Under the conditions of an existence marked by traps, temptations, and provocations, tolerance aims in a way to rescue the decency of humanity. In an ideal world, tolerance would be unnecessary – a world in which evil was tamed, power equally distributed, and differences harmonized. Until the improbable moment when this comes to pass, we are, so to speak, condemned to tolerance. We must cultivate tolerance lucidly, level-headedly, and without idolatry, and we must keep a watchful eye on the latent pathology of its functioning. For tolerance can certainly have murky abysses, suspicious motivations, and deforming effects. Let us look more closely at some of these aspects. There are forms of tolerance that, despite attractive packaging, contain a poisonous core. For example, there is the tolerance born of ambition. From the perspective of an exaggerated self-assessment, tolerance becomes a form of condescension and patronization, the arrogant marginalization of the tolerated object: I move on such lofty heights that I don’t deign even to perceive difference. I refuse to lower myself to deal with everything that contradicts me or disturbs my serenity.

Under certain circumstances, arrogance decides to behave tolerantly out of a kind of strategic consideration: I tolerate in order to defuse, I swallow and assimilate what resists me, and I thereby integrate resistance in the system, in the overpowering image of the system. In the 1966 anthology *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, Herbert Marcuse defined this kind of tolerance as a “mechanism of integration” and classified it as “repressive tolerance”. But condescending tolerance is not the only blameworthy form; there is also tolerance “from below” – tolerance as the expression of submissive humility, as enduring an offense, or as a sign of weak character or convictions. One can also be “tolerant” out of opportunism or pure indifference. The atheist who declares himself “tolerant” in religious questions is a fraud: in reality, the whole field of the

religious is indifferent to him, so that “tolerance” costs him nothing.

A lax practice of tolerance and the demagogic exaggeration of tolerance bring with them the risk of anarchic developments. Karl Popper rightly remarked in his book *The Open Society and Its Enemies* that “unlimited tolerance leads to the disappearance of tolerance”. In other words, we have to reserve “the right not to tolerate the intolerant”. Popper’s wording is extremely circumspect. He speaks of the *intolerant* person, but seems unconcerned with the category of the unacceptable, the *intolerable*. But tolerance is dangerous precisely when it minimizes, evades, or simply negates the problem of the intolerable.

**WHAT CAN WE SAY** about this problem? Are there objective limits to tolerance? In the applied sciences, things are simple and revealingly obvious and clear. Technicians use the term “range of tolerance” to indicate the limits within which certain deviations are allowed without impairing a given whole. The range of tolerance designates the degree of precision with which a component must be produced, for example. Machines can “tolerate” a certain approximation in the diameter of a pipe or the weight of a coin, but there is a limit beyond which the piece is rejected. The same is true of the human body: up to a certain limit, it can withstand physical pain or toxic substances, but beyond this limit, the physiological balance collapses. No system, whether mechanical or biological, can survive conditions that exceed its range of tolerance. No whole can tolerate principles or situations that undermine its *raison d’être*. For example, a judicious constitution cannot contain an article giving every citizen the right to violate the constitution.

Another illustration of the intolerable is *error*. The decision to show “understanding” for someone who maintains that two and two equal five cannot be regarded as tolerance. Tolerance is equally inappropriate in the legal system. One cannot plead, in the name of tolerance, not to penalize a proven crime. Reduced sentences, pardons and amnesty operate on completely different principles, and are on a completely different semantic level from tolerance.

In child-raising, too, unlimited tolerance is not a particularly auspicious solution. Of course, brutal methods and narrow-minded didacticism without any understanding or patience are out of the question. But the theory of “identification” with the person one wants to bring up, the tendency to find a justifying and excusing diagnosis for all his inadequacies inhibits and blocks the modeling impulse. Quite simply, you cannot bring up a child whom you “understand completely” by programmatically putting yourself “in his place”. The place of the pedagogue must be unmistakably delimited from that of the pupil, even if the pedagogue also has something to learn while he teaches.

As the topic of tolerance became more and more “politically correct” and fashionable in the wake of postmodern relativism, its contours began to blur. At the beginning of the 1980s, the “paradox of tolerance” began to be mentioned with increasing frequency. The paradox arose, first, from the question, “How should the tolerant spirit respond to intolerance?”, and second, from the difficulty of finding a precise argumentation for the claim that “it is good to tolerate what is not good”. But to what extent is the tolerant spirit obliged to behave permissively toward the intolerant person and the intolerable? And how can acceptance of the unacceptable be rationally justified? Isn’t the fact that you declare yourself tolerant an insult – as Goethe said – to the thing tolerated? Should tolerance develop towards an encouraging agreement, toward esteem and respect? Shouldn’t the exception



finally be regarded, not as a transgression of the norm, but rather as a norm-shaping transgression? Starting from this kind of question, a *tolerated* reality begins gradually expanding and striving for legitimacy by questioning the legitimacy of the *tolerating* authority. In other words, the exception becomes tolerant of the rule, and the rule takes on a guilty attitude, even an inferiority complex, toward the exception. The exception becomes militant and self-satisfied, almost discriminatory and intolerant.

All this confusion is the result of the way we define and relate to “difference”. We have noted that tolerance can exist only where there is difference. The difference wants to be accepted and have a right to its identity; it wants validity, which would be normal in a pluralistic world that is prepared to give difference its due.

**BUT THE MATTER IS** much trickier than it appears at first glance. For difference, on the one hand, wants to be recognized and confirmed *as difference*, while at the same time it strives for a status of *non-difference*, integrated, along with all other differences, in normality. What is tolerated as *different* does not always want to be considered different, a specimen of a peculiar category. Consequently, it does not like to be treated *differently* from others (even if this difference is positive, a surplus of benevolence). Its discourse has two components that, in a way, contradict each other: (A) Respect me as I am, no matter how much I differ from you. Let me be different! (B) I am basically your equal and don’t want the status of a tolerated exception. The difference that separates us is incidental when we consider the humanity that unites us. So don’t constantly remind me that I am different! Accordingly: (A) Accept and bear responsibility for the difference, and (B) behave as if the difference did not exist. To unite the two demands (A) and (B) in a single, coherent mode of behavior, a great deal of social benevolence, psychological sensitivity, and metaphysical perspicacity is required. If one emphasizes the difference, one will be suspected of a latent discriminatory spirit. If one emphasizes equality, one will be suspected of minimizing the difference. Whatever one does, one is caught in a vicious circle that provokes general disapproval. One takes precautionary measures, but these can turn into as many mistakes. It resembles the cases of “sexism” that I myself experienced at several universities in the United States: If you let a woman into a building before you, you are labeled a “macho”; if you don’t, you have no manners.

Another example is the development of a disadvantaged community’s relations with a privileged community. In the first years after the fall of the communist regime in Romania, numerous donations arrived in the country for handicapped children. It proved extremely difficult to explain to healthy, but equally impoverished children in nearby children’s homes why the wonderful presents from abroad did not come their way too – especially because the healthy institutionalized children, in their childish innocence, did not see a big difference between themselves and the others.

The contemporary tribulations of tolerance make it hard to discern who tolerates whom; one no longer knows who is the victim of whom. The one tolerated yesterday becomes today’s tolerant one, or invents a new kind of intolerance. The fear of making a mistake leads to complicated forms of self-censorship, to baroque forms of hypocrisy, and to unprecedented social anxieties. The problem of tolerance is developing unimagined and unexpected nuances. A passionate discussion of this theme can be found in Thomas Nagel’s *Mortal Questions* (1979). The author notes that the fear of slipping into a condemnable *negative* discrimination gives rise to a natural tendency to practice a *positive* discrimination. Among equally

## “THE NEED FOR EQUALITY ENDS IN A CRISIS OF THE NEED FOR FREE COMPETITION AND FREE CHOICE.”

qualified candidates for a particular position, the choice is generally for the disadvantaged, black, or female candidate. The question now arises whether this decision is just or not. Nagel’s opinion is that this is a just decision whose goal is to correct an earlier, “traditional”, clearly unjust system.

Yet positive discrimination taken to its extreme points up the problem of the right relationship between equality and freedom. The need for equality ends in a crisis of the need for free competition and free choice. Also, how far can the rule of positive discrimination go? Nowadays, racist and sexist injustice are minimal and under control in the civilized countries. But new dilemmas and new predicaments can appear on the horizon at any time. Perhaps we would spontaneously prefer the better looking of two equal candidates for the same TV position and, to avoid negative discrimination, would *rationaly* have to choose the one who is not so good-looking. We would have to take care not to advantage the slender over the fat, the blonde over the dark-haired, and the tall over the short. But what should we do when we have to choose between an intelligent candidate and one who is not so intelligent? Or between a talented and an untalented actor? One could assume that, in our perfidious way, we would tend to prefer intelligence and talent. But shouldn’t we have scruples and ask ourselves why the less intelligent and less talented should be blamed for being the way they are? Shouldn’t we prefer them, thus correcting the injustice done them at birth? Nagel concedes that proceeding further in this direction leads to the boundary of moral utopianism. We will never find the perfect dosage of regulative constraint that does not hinder individual freedom or the right to make a decision by personal criteria and in harmony with a way of living and working that is not, in Habermas’s words, “colonized” by an abstract jurisprudence.

**WE ARE MOVING ON UNCERTAIN**, dangerous terrain paved with prejudices, vulnerabilities, and mistrust. Every radicalism can lead to suffering, but every permissive frivolity can lead to confusion and disorder. We simply have no solutions. So let’s not act as if we had. All we can say is that the reasons for our tolerance are more numerous and weighty than the arguments for intolerance. We can be tolerant in the name of reason and decide that every individual has the right to his own opinion and that this principle of law is the original rationality of our specific structure. But we can also be tolerant in the name of the uncertainty of our shaky reason and decide that we have no access to universal truth and thus no access to absolute certainty, and that, consequently, we cannot claim to be right all the time. We can believe the Stoics that man stands above truth and that it would thus be unwise to limit him geometrically with abstract judgments. Or we can be relativists like John Milton (*Areopagitica*, a *Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, 1644) and note that, on an immanent level, there is no chemically pure evil or chemically pure good and that we thus lack criteria for categorical and radical distancing and separation (“In moral evil much good can be mixed”). We can say with John Stuart Mill that toler-

ance is the necessary derivative of freedom, or claim with John Rawls that it is the logical correlate of equality.

An extremely important and far too little noted source of tolerance is *humor*. To view the spectacle of the world without doggedness, to be able to enjoy the colorful charm of the real, to be able to distinguish between the very few things that must be taken seriously and the numerous things that need not be taken so seriously, and above all not to take oneself too seriously, with all one’s pompous opinions, pre-fabricated certainties, and more or less hypocritical claims and demands – all of this together would certainly be a very thorough motivation for a spirit of tolerance.

**A STIMULATING BACKGROUND** for tolerance, along with humor, is genuine faith or – to use a more encompassing term – the *sense of transcendence*. Intolerance is the opposite: an exaggeration of immanence, a kind of short-sightedness that monumentalizes differences perceived in the undetermined development of the horizontal and that is unable to gain elevation to view things from the vantage point of a calm timelessness, rather than from the perspective of clamorous everyday life. Tolerance imitates or anticipates the sovereign justice of God, “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). Divine “justice” is termed *anoché* in the Greek text. The prefix *aná* indicates the rising direction. Tolerance is the aura of one who rises above differences. *Anoché* also means reserve, tranquility and calm, the *suspension of judgment*, the tendency to cease fire, giving the other a chance. When I think about it, the biblical terminology of tolerance – whether *anoché*, *hypomonē* (see Luke 8:15; 1st Corinthians 13:7), *makrothymia* (which in the Old Testament designates God’s ability to dominate His wrath at human sins), or the Latin derivations (*patientia*, *sustinentia*, *sufferentia*) adopted in the works of the Church Fathers – leaves little space for innovation by later speculations. Modern tolerance is the worldly version of an ascetic virtue: *patience*, the ability to avoid prematurely classifying unclassifiable people and uncomfortable situations, the ability to understandingly endure difference, hindrance, and hostility, and the refusal to institute oneself as a judging authority. Avva Theodotos, a rather obscure monk in fourth-century Egypt, summed up the entire spectrum of tolerance (which presupposes the identification and acceptance of deviation from the norm) in the laconic sentence: “He who said ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ also said ‘Thou shalt not judge others’.”

How Christianity, with such a heritage, could itself become intolerant and why some manifestations of Islam, whose body of texts on tolerance is even more extensive than the Christian one, became fanatical and merciless – that is another story. To tell it here and now would go beyond your tolerance. ✖

Note: This lecture was delivered at the Romanian Institute of Culture, Stockholm, in May 2012.





# THE PRUSSIAN PROVINCE OF POSEN

# A RESERVOIR

# FOR MODERNITY

by **Anders Hammarlund**

It was almost a standard expression. Berlin Jews sizing up a fellow Jew said with a tinge of pride, with a recognition of achievement and a sense of self-assurance: “Er kam über den Schlesischen Bahnhof.” They were referring to the main railway station for trains coming from the East.

“The East” included a good part of the province of Posen, which was a kind of reservoir for Jews in the big city. They could replenish their numbers with people who were bent on success and yet did not forget where

they came from. The vibrant Jewish cultural life in this part of Germany can be traced back to the nineteenth century. In 1838, a set of prayer books for the Holidays (*machzorim*) was printed in the province and had subscribers in no less than forty-five cities and towns. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in the years leading up to the First World War, Jewish life was elevated to new heights in the small towns of Posen until history turned this life to ashes and wiped out all traces of Jewish existence.

Arno Herzberg looks back on his childhood in Filehne, an insignificant small town in Netzeland, a forgotten strip of land that was a sort of no-man’s-land for a long time, one of many disputed historical territories in Central Europe. Herzberg was born in Filehne in 1908. As head of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in Berlin from 1934 to 1937, he made a significant contribution to the Jewish resistance before he was finally forced to flee Germany and settled in New York. In his old age, he collected his childhood memories in an article published in the Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook for 1997.<sup>1</sup>

**Annexation of Polish land made Berlin a “central” German city. It hasn’t always been that.**



For many centuries, the strip of land alongside the Netze River belonged to the Kingdom of Poland and constituted the border with Germanized Pomerania, which was part of the German Reich. But when the Polish state was erased from the political map in a series of “partitions” in the late 1700s, the area was annexed by the land-hungry Prussia. Protestant Berlin now became the political and cultural center of gravity in place of the old Catholic capitals of Warsaw and Krakow, which had been devoured by Russia and Austria. The German ethnic presence in these parts was, however, nothing new. There had been German villages here since the Middle Ages and this should not be interpreted as a manifestation of some kind of coordinated German imperialism, but rather as an offshoot of the structural peculiarities of the old Polish kingdom. Ethnic diversity, coexistence, mutual dependence – and subjugation – were all elements of a general Central European pattern.

When Prussia expanded eastwards, it also gained a large Jewish population. The conditions of Jewish life had been harshly circumscribed in the original electoral core country of Brandenburg. Jewish congregations were small, scattered, and suppressed. Jews had not been given permission to settle in Berlin until 1671, while in Poland, a fully developed Jewish community had been evolving since the late Middle Ages. In their characteristically rational way, the Prussian authorities began administering the Jewish presence: they counted and registered Jews and investigated their social, cultural, and financial circumstances. Through *haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment movement, Prussian rationalism won passionate supporters among intellectual Jews, who believed the Enlightenment was the path to liberation and citizenship.

**Filehne (the Polish Wieleń)** was, according to Prussian nomenclature, a *Kreisstadt* of the Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) *Regierungsbezirk*, which in turn belonged to the Grand Duchy of Posen (Poznań). In the new German Reich proclaimed in 1871, the region was reorganized as the Province of Posen. The little river Netze/Notec still winds through this rural landscape in modern-day northwestern Poland, of course, and eventually makes its contribution to the sometimes all too powerful currents of the Warta and the Oder. But the traditional culture of the place has been dissolved and its bearers and social structures are no more. Very few of the people who live there today have family roots in the district that go back any further than 1945. As early as the turbulent years of 1918–1919, when new states and borders were welded together in Europe’s temporarily unclaimed *Zwischenraum* between the Balkans and the Baltics, an exodus had begun from the mousetrap of Central European politics. The following three decades brought the total breakdown of civilization in the area. One must summon a great deal of imagination to picture nineteenth-century Filehne. Recollections of this Städtchen along the Netze have been spread across the world, embedded in the family histories of Americans, Australians, and Israelis, but most of this has remained oral history; little has been put in writing, and even less published, beyond Herzberg’s memoirs.



From left: Georg Simmel; title page of Abraham Baer's liturgy handbook (1877); Moritz Lazarus.

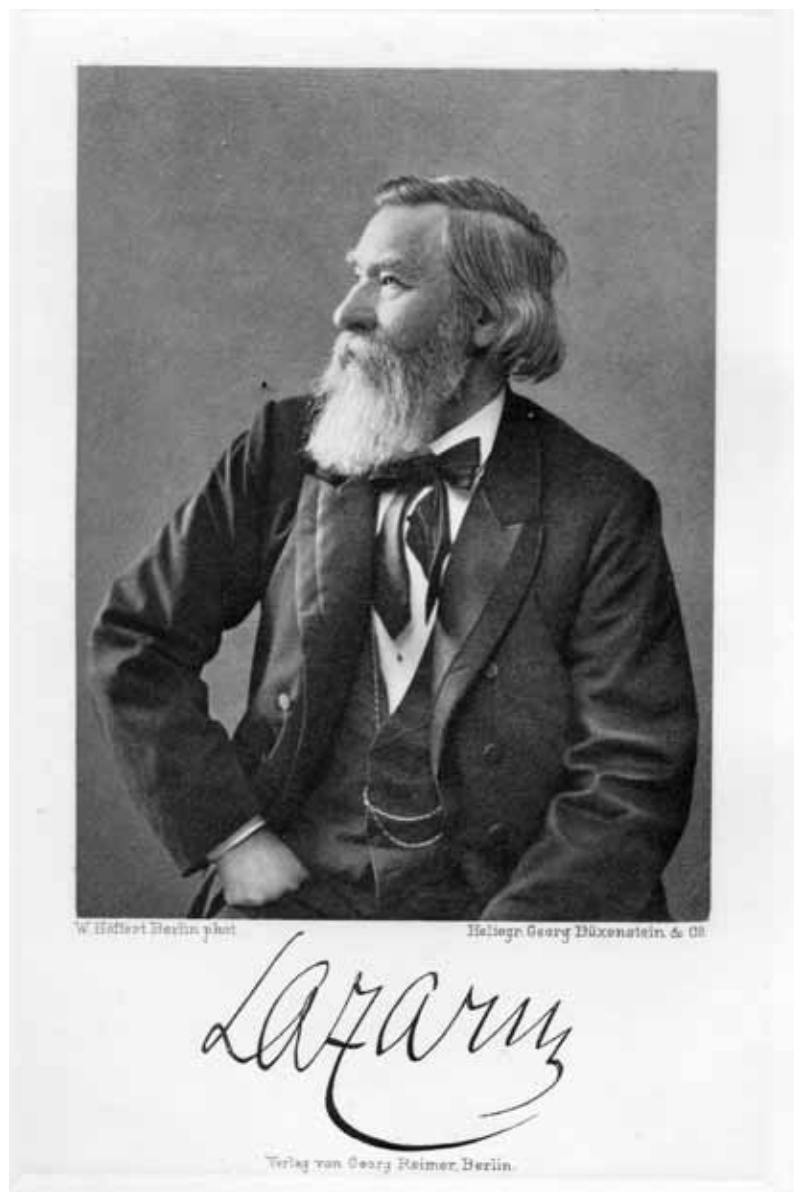
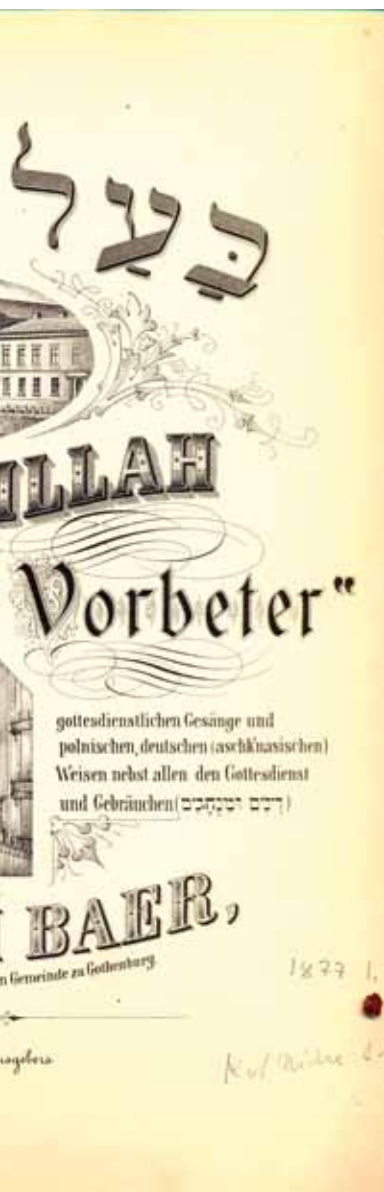
A small river called the Netze divided the town. It was small enough for the big boys in our gang to be able to throw a stone over to the opposite bank. I could only make it half-way, but could hit the small steamers and freighters floating down the calm waters. It was my way of resenting their going into the wide world north of the river. To the north, German peasantry and a large private estate dominated the countryside. To the south, Polish peasants lived in small villages. In between was the town, a meeting-place for north and south. Every week the peasants drove their horse-drawn carts to market to sell their products. When the day was done, they spent their money in the shops that lined the main street, Wilhelmstrasse. These shops, mostly owned by Jews, sold fabrics, shoes, hardware, clothing and the basic necessities of life.<sup>2</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the town had a population of somewhere between three and five thousand, mostly German-speaking Lutherans. Around 1900, the Jewish population numbered about 800. Jews had lived here since 1655 and Herzberg described a flourishing Jewish culture, which despite rather strict adherence to the rules of *Halacha* was wide-open to modern influences from Berlin and Breslau. One of the cornerstones

of the multifaceted Jewish life in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Filehne was Frau Abraham's restaurant, where patrons could read the Berlin papers and discuss worldly and political issues. Another was the synagogue built in 1787.

There was a minyan every morning and evening and we did not need to hunt for the tenth man. The way to the Temple led through a narrow pathway next to our house. The worshipers came, the men in their high hats, the women in their Sabbath best. The pathway opened onto a wide street and there was the Temple, in red brick with high glass windows. There was the beautiful interior with its high ceiling, and the well-polished wooden seats. There was the garden, full of lilac bushes. Children could play hide-and-seek under them. Close by was the bes hamidrash [house of study], a small building with one large room.<sup>3</sup>

Herzberg portrays the Filehne of the early 1900s, but he also speaks about the previous generations of his family. The special synthesis of tradition and modernity that seems to have been characteristic of Filehne becomes apparent in these stories. The dominant figure in the family history is Arno's paternal grandfather



Abraham Herzberg, who achieved a certain level of affluence as the town's *Königlicher Spediteur*, but who was also a traditional observant Jew.

When my grandfather built our house, he saw to it that the flat roof was fenced in as required by the Jewish Law. He built the house with a permanent sukkah. It was a unique arrangement. The roof over one of the upstairs rooms could be opened by pulling on a strong cord attached to a weight. The ceiling of this room was thatched with a layer of straw. We could see the light through it and, at night, the stars. When it rained, we just lowered the roof. When it was too cold, a little stove gave the desired heat. We decorated the room with strings of chestnuts, flowers and lavish greenery.<sup>4</sup>

## THE TALMUD AND KULTURWISSENSCHAFT

Abraham Herzberg's relative affluence probably arose after Filehne was connected to the rapidly expanding Prussian rail network, which likely occurred shortly after 1850. During the rapid urbanization process in nineteenth-century Prussia – which accelerated

after the unification of Germany in 1871 – Berlin became one of the spearheads of European modernity. Berlin took on this role because of the strong tradition of Enlightenment (in the minds of German and German-Jewish liberals, Prussia was the guarantor of political rationalism and progressiveness) and the intellectual synergies that arose through the emancipatory reforms that created the culture-bearing social stratum of *Bildungsbürger*. This article sheds light on the role of the Jewish reform movement in German nineteenth-century culture and in particular its significance to the establishment of modern *Kulturwissenschaft* – the cultural and social sciences – after 1850. There is a wide body of literature on Jewish reform efforts, but the phenomenon is often portrayed as an internal process within the Jewish minority, with a focus on changes in liturgy and religious practice. More recent research on the epoch, however, emphasizes the affinity of Jewish reform with and its impact on general social development in Germany and Europe. In this context, I would like to mention in particular Simone Lässig's inspiring work on the Jewish minority's successful path from exclusion to the educated middle class.<sup>5</sup>

Filehne and similar towns in the province of Posen were the jumping-off point for many ascents up social and academic ladders. But one must understand that the young Jews who took the train to Berlin were not

only leaving something behind. They also brought something important with them to the newspaper editorial offices and academic lecture halls of the big city. In premodern Europe, two confessionally defined traditions of learning had existed side by side since the Middle Ages, each with its specific institutions and forms of expression. The university system had evolved under the protection of the Church, and non-Christian believers were thus denied access to its lecture halls and libraries, where Latin was the *lingua franca*. The Jewish system of learning had its own network of small *beth midrashes* (houses of learning/study) and *yeshivas* (Talmudic schools) and had – despite the often far-reaching and inconsistent restrictions to which communities of the Jewish Diaspora were subjected in the Christian states – preserved an intense tradition of text interpretation and text processing, with Hebrew and Aramaic the languages of learning.

**In the traditional** Jewish community, social status was connected to study and learning. These were studies pursued for their own sake, which had inherent value as a *mitzvah*, an ethical-religious decree or duty. It is the story of this special tradition of intellectualism and its social resonance that Moritz Lazarus, a scholar of societies and cultures, tells in his memoirs of his youth, which are an interesting correlate to Arno Herzberg's slightly naïve and nostalgic depiction.<sup>6</sup> Lazarus, born in Filehne in 1824, came to play an important role in the emergence of the modern cultural and social sciences in German-speaking Europe.<sup>7</sup> He is in many ways characteristic of the generation of Jewish intellectuals born into the old world of Jewish learning, but who could, through the offices of social change, be “reborn” into the modern academy.

“Die Haushaltung war ausserordentlich charakteristisch”, he writes. Two older ladies, Lazarus's paternal aunts Esther and Gitel (called Esterchen and Gitelchen), were the true sovereigns of the large household. They were also owners of the property and the family's trading company. The elder of the two sisters managed the day-to-day business and dealt with customers, while the younger kept the books and managed the correspondence. And what did the men do? They studied.

Lazarus's father Aaron was the Dayan, chairman of the town's *beth din*, the rabbinical court, and a prominent Talmudist. As was customary, he brought his son into the tradition of learning when the boy was only six years old. Every weekday morning, the hours between six and eight were devoted to studies of the Talmud at home. After the boy's *bar mitzvah* his studies were pursued in the *beth midrash* in Filehne, where Lazarus got to know many *bocherim*, wandering beggar students.

My occupation was as follows: every morning, except for Fridays and Saturdays, studies of the later rabbinic texts and codices and their commentators between five and seven o'clock (six and eight in the winter), together with my father and my uncle. Thereafter, until dinner-time, study of the Talmud, which was usually general once a week, otherwise strict. To be



meaningful, these studies demanded all of these hours of attention. They had to be pursued with the utmost precision. Every aspect of the Talmud must be traced through all the centuries up to the most recent commentators. The strict study consisted of Talmudic law. Preparations for this began as afternoon or evening studies during my early years of study, under the guidance of another student of the Talmud. On Thursday evenings, we repeated the week's lesson in the absence of the teacher; this was how it was usually done at all higher yeshivas. These Thursday evenings were often rather pleasant assemblies. During the breaks, we ate simple meals, or on occasion some delicacy, which were spiced with lively and entertaining conversation until the walls of the school echoed with laughter ...<sup>8</sup>

In 1833, the Prussian government instituted compulsory German-speaking elementary schools for the Jewish population in the province of Posen. The primary task of this new school system (beyond imprinting the High German language) was to spread the educational canon of German idealism: Leibniz, Kant, Goethe, and Schiller. This centralized push towards cultural homogenization was not directed solely at the Jews. The goal was essentially the same as that which applied in the Protestant (German) and Catholic (Polish) elementary schools also found in Filehne – *Hochdeutsch und Bildung*. One can interject that schooling in High German was certainly just as important for Protestant children as for Jewish children, as the vernacular of the town was very dialectical and Low German, and perhaps just as far removed from the standard High German language as the Yiddish spoken by the Jews of Filehne.

In his memoirs, Lazarus implies that his youthful observations of the interplay among the three ethnic, linguistic, and religious affiliations practiced in Filehne became an important source of inspiration for his later work as a scholar of societies and cultures.<sup>9</sup> What was it that created and maintained boundaries between different social collectives? What was a nation, actually? Or a religion?

**At the age of sixteen,** after ten years of study, the young Lazarus had mastered the foundations of the Talmudic tradition. A career as a rabbi seemed foreordained, but the family could not afford further studies. Lazarus secured an apprenticeship in Posen, but continued his intensive independent study of the German classics. As a consequence of the secularization process in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, certain German universities had been opened to Jewish students. Lazarus's goal now was admission to the University of Berlin, founded in 1810 by the linguist and educational reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt, which had through its modern research profile become an engine of intellectual life in Germany and a model for many European universities.

In 1844, at the age of twenty, Lazarus was able by means of philanthropic assistance to secure a place at the secondary school in Braunschweig. In his autobiographical notes, he implies that it was because of the



extensive memory training entailed by his Talmudic studies that he was able to complete the secondary course in two years, thus opening his path to the University of Berlin.<sup>10</sup> The times were characterized by feverish development in the field of human sciences. A variety of special disciplines were spun off from philosophy and history, such as psychology, art history, ethnology, and musicology. Lazarus, along with another Jewish Berlin academic, the linguist Heymann Steinthal (1823–1899), became the founder of a new discipline, but its subject was not any particular form of art or category of object, but rather human interaction itself.

### **“PEOPLE ARE ASKED BY US WHO THEY ARE” ON THE NATURE OF AFFILIATION**

The fundamental starting point was the simple question: How is society possible? They called their new research orientation *Völkerpsychologie*. In 1860, Lazarus was offered a professorship in his new discipline at the University of Berne, Switzerland, and from this seat of learning and through the journal *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, which he co-founded with Steinthal in 1859, he engaged in a discussion about cultural identity that is considered to have laid the foundation for the emergence of modern cultural and social sciences in German-speaking Europe.

The name that Lazarus and Steinthal chose for their discipline caused some misunderstandings and misinterpretations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. The German word *Volk* sounds rather worrisomely Teutonic to our ears, but to Lazarus, it stood only for the collective aspect of cultural identity and is entirely liberated from the metaphysical notions associated with romantic rhetoric on the “soul of the people”. If one could speak of individual psychology, one should also be able to talk about the manifestations of psychological phenomena on the collective level, according to Lazarus and Steinthal. But it has been difficult to find apt translations of the term *Völkerpsychologie*. It has been called folk psychology, national psychology, anthropological psychology, and ethnic psychology. Social psychology is, however, probably the most adequate English equivalent.<sup>11</sup>

Alongside the general intellectual-historical background to Lazarus and Steinthal's endeavors, there is also a political impetus. In the atmosphere of increasingly acute national agitation that characterized the decades after 1848 in Central Europe, there was a need to objectively respond to the essentialist zealous of purity who spoke of biologically determined common destinies. In a lecture entitled “Über das Verhältniß des Einzelnen zur Gesamtheit”, which Lazarus held in Berne in 1861, he develops his views on what we would today call the nature of ethnic affiliation.<sup>12</sup>





From left: Neue Synagoge, Berlin. Oil painting by Emile de Cauwer; Neue Synagoge, interior; Göteborg synagogue.

Spiritual or mental closeness or difference is independent of genetic kinship. The concept of a people is based on the interplay of spiritual and historical circumstances on the one hand, and nature-given conditions on the other, the intervention of the culture in nature. That which first and foremost constitutes a people is not certain objective characteristics, such as origins, language, etc., but rather the subjective beliefs among the individual members of the people, the individuals who together constitute a people. The concept of a people rests upon the subjective understandings of individual members about themselves, about their similarity, and affiliation. When we study plants and animals, it is the natural scientist who classifies and systematizes on the basis of objective, distinctive traits – people, on the other hand, are asked by us who they are, among which people they count themselves. [*Menschen aber fragen wir, zu welchem Volke sie sich zählen.*]

[...] One should not be surprised by the subjective nature to which we ascribe the concept of a people. The people is entirely a mental entity: it has no corporeal existence, even if it is not independent of material conditions. A people is a mental creation of the individuals that belong to it. They are not a people – they continuously create the people.

We see that Lazarus here comes very close to the fashionable concept in cultural anthropology regarded by many as an advance of the 1980s: the imagined community. His insight into the continuous creation of affiliation leads him to an interest in the *media* and *forms* of this creation and thus to a radically new understanding of the social relevance of the aesthetic phenomena.

## IMAGINATION INTO POWER THE JEWISH REFORM MOVEMENT

One of the most interesting historic architectural sights in Berlin is the Neue Synagoge on Oranienburger Straße, consecrated in 1866. The domed frontage reconstructed in the 1990s is seen by many as an expression of a Jewish tradition rooted in the Middle East, but the building is actually entirely divorced from tradition. The eighteenth-century Alte Synagoge, which was located a few blocks away on Heidereutergasse, on the other hand, was a typical representative of the traditional European synagogue, a building in a very simple, classical style whose design did not in any way depart from the surrounding buildings.

The Neue Synagoge was the foremost architectonic expression of the Jewish reform movement in Berlin. In his design idiom, the architect, Eduard Knoblauch, makes a connection to the epoch in Jewish cultural history that those striving towards reform perceived

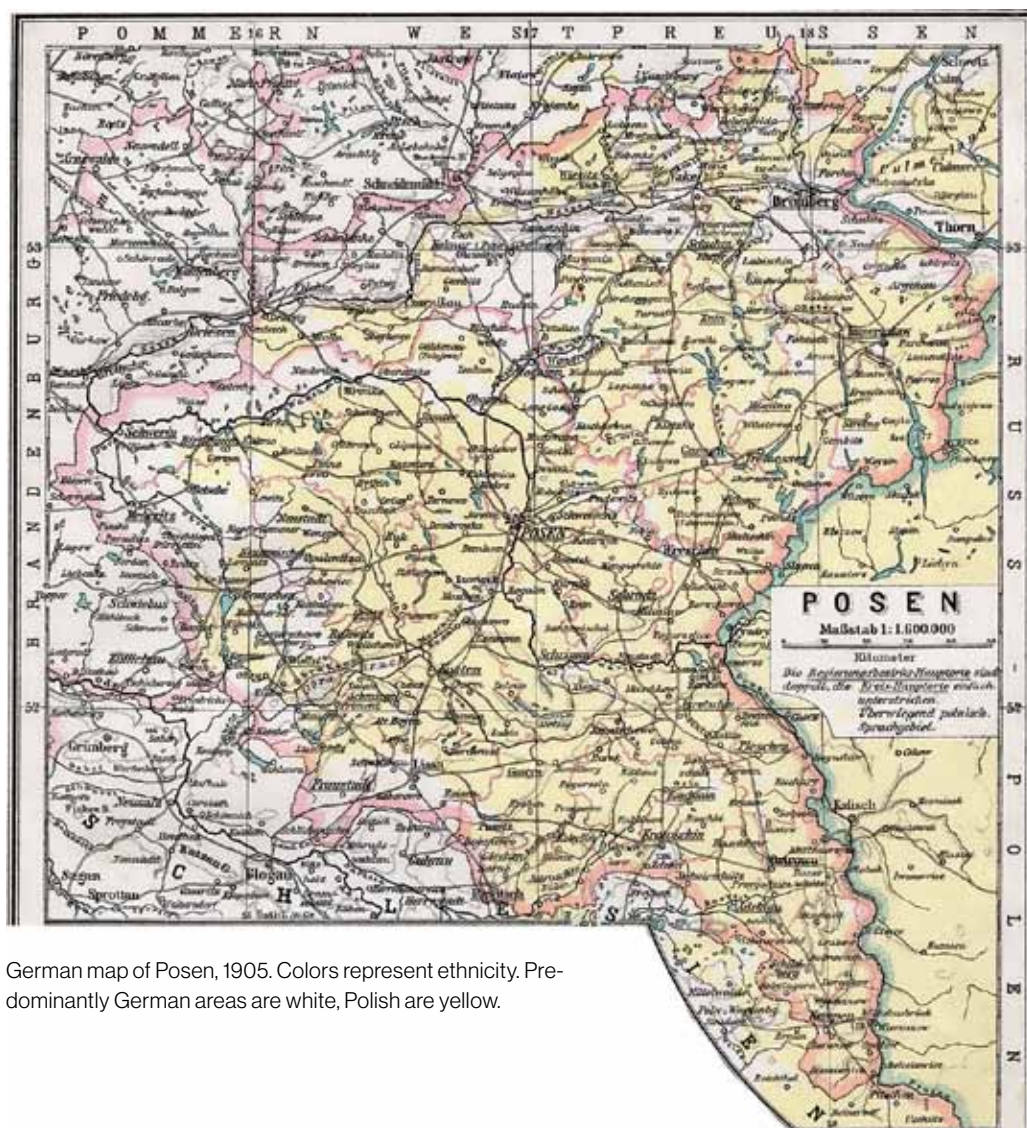
as the Golden Age of Jewish culture in Europe: medieval Al-Andalus.<sup>13</sup> The “rediscovery” and renewed appreciation of pluralistic Muslim rule in Spain is largely the result of research by Jewish philologists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the early days, when Jewish intellectuals were allowed into the halls of academia, the “Oriental” languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic – often became their field of research. They had the Hebrew and Aramaic from their Talmudic studies, while they acquired the closely related Arabic so that they could study and translate medieval Jewish philosophy (mainly Maimonides), much of which was written in that language. As Jews, they could not expect to gain academic positions, but Semitic philology was a good qualification in the competition for rabbinic positions (for which a PhD eventually became a requirement).

Scholar and rabbi Abraham Geiger (1810–1874) became a dominant figure in the field and also came to play a central role in the Jewish reform movement. Geiger was born in a traditional Jewish milieu in Frankfurt am Main, but after his studies at the University of Bonn in the 1830s, he got involved in the Jewish identity project.<sup>14</sup> The emancipation process had torn down many social barriers, but had also problematized the formerly clearly demarcated Jewish identity. In the old, confessionally and strictly separated Europe it was certainly difficult to be a Jew, but it was not difficult to know who was a Jew. The difference between the Christian and Jewish collectives was fundamental to the system and was emphasized through segregating decrees and external signs. The emancipation was euphoric, but it also brought a kind of loss of identity, and the reform movement may be seen as a reaction to this perception of ethnic vagueness. As a rabbi in Breslau and later in Frankfurt am Main, Geiger created the paradigm for what would later be called liberal Judaism.

**Through the long** centuries of confessional oppression, rigorous adherence to the national religious aspects of Judaism had been an understandable defense mechanism, without which the Jewish people would have been vanquished. The radically changed conditions brought by the Enlightenment and emancipation had, Geiger believed, fundamentally changed the circumstances.<sup>15</sup> Jerusalem and the nation of Israel were historical phenomena, a kind of finished phase in the evolution of Jewish culture as ethnicity: in the present, their only significance was symbolic. In contrast, the *ethical* and intellectual core of the religious tradition was timeless and universal. The role of Judaism in contemporary social development was to make this cultural heritage available to modern nation-building processes. The identification with the idea of progress was fundamental. Some scholars hold that traditional Jewish messianism, faith in an age of delivery and liberation, was channeled into this secular identification with modernity. People had the sense that they were living in a time when anything was possible and when the unchained power of creativity had let Andalusia rise again along the Spree.

Geiger was installed as the rabbi of the Neue Synagoge in Berlin in 1869. Here he came to work with Moritz Lazarus, who had returned to Berlin, where as professor of philosophy at the Military Academy he





German map of Posen, 1905. Colors represent ethnicity. Predominantly German areas are white, Polish are yellow.

instilled the classical German ideals of *Bildung* in the minds of future Prussian officers. Lazarus and Geiger had been interacting for a long time within the emerging reform movement, for instance in connection with a series of rabbinical synods convened in order to iron out considerable differences of opinion on the religious, political, and cultural issues of the day. Lazarus initiated the legendary Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, founded in 1872; Geiger wrote the curriculum. *Wissenschaft des Judentums* may be regarded as the scholarly or academic aspect of the Jewish reform movement. The philologist and rabbi Leopold Zunz (1794–1886) is regarded as one of its most prominent figures. The concept should be understood as “Jewish studies”, embracing every conceivable aspect of Jewish culture, but with no specific theoretical or methodological aim.<sup>16</sup> The new college was a non-confessional institution. Its primary aim was not to educate rabbis and other Jewish officials, but to offer all comers (including non-Jews) advanced study in Jewish history, religion, linguistics, and philosophy. Many people were indeed interested and the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums became, despite its limited financial resources, an important address in the intellectual landscape of Berlin. Geiger, Lazarus, and Steinthal all taught at the institute.

The founding of the Hochschule must be seen in

the context of nineteenth-century national strivings towards unity. Geiger and Lazarus considered the creation of a unified German state on liberal grounds a progressive project. In this sense, they were dedicated German nationalists. Lazarus’s professorship at the Prussian Military Academy is an eloquent example of this dedication. Doing away with the relics and privileges of feudalism and the emergence of a sound and secularized educated middle class were seen as unquestionable emancipatory advances. For these liberals, there was thus no conflict between intense cultivation of the Jewish tradition of learning and dedicated participation in German culture. They were shaped by the ideas of the liberal revolution of 1848, but the German unification of 1871 was, as is known, accomplished with blood and iron, not *Kultur und Bildung*. Populist, anti-Semitic propagandists saw their chances in the Wilhelminian empire, and the establishment of a Jewish institution, incorporated into the German academic system, was thus seen as an important marker.

**As professors** and lecturers at the University of Berlin, Lazarus and Steinthal also taught several prominent students who would later make significant contributions in the social sciences and humanities. Perhaps the most important among them was Georg

Simmel, who is considered one of the founders of German sociology. Through Simmel (whose parents had arrived a generation before at Schlesischer Bahnhof), the ideas of Lazarus and Steinthal were spread to other important thinkers, including Max Weber, Leopold von Wiese, Alfred Vierkandt, and Karl Mannheim. In his legendary lectures and essays, Simmel takes up and elaborates on many of the central arguments of *Völkerpsychologie*. In Simmel’s thinking, Lazarus’s concept of *objektiver Geist*, which referred to the legacy of symbols and beliefs inherited from foregoing generations to which every new member of society is inevitably socialized in the creation of his individual identity (*subjektiver Geist*), developed into *Kultur*, that is, the broad, anthropological concept of culture. For Simmel, media and aesthetics became keys to understanding the social. In the process of gathering material for his thesis, *Psychologische und ethnographische Studien über die Anfänge der Musik*, Simmel was already engaged in ethnomusicological fieldwork in 1879, most likely inspired by Lazarus. Simmel had intended to defend this thesis for his doctoral degree, but as he had ventured into such an untried academic borderland, his professors became doubtful and rejected the work.<sup>17</sup> Instead, his doctorate was conferred in 1881 for a thesis on Immanuel Kant’s understanding of the essence of matter. The ethnomusicological study was published the following year in Lazarus and Steinthal’s *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*.<sup>18</sup>

Lazarus/Steinthal, and later Simmel, became well-known outside the German language sphere early on and their thinking influenced other scholars including the French sociologist Celestin Bouglé (1870–1940), who had studied in Berlin, and the American William Isaac Thomas (1863–1947) of the Chicago School. But the scholar who was informed most strongly by *Völkerpsychologie* was the founder of American cultural anthropology, Franz Boas (1858–1942), who grew up in a liberal Jewish home in Germany. In his paper “The History of Anthropology”, published in *Science* in 1904, Boas refers to “folk psychology” as his most important source of inspiration for linguistic-anthropological study, research that must include language as well as myths, religion, and aesthetics. Students of Boas who went on to become prominent scholars include Alfred Kroeber, Edward Sapir, and Ruth Benedict.<sup>19</sup>

## POSEN IN SWEDEN

The small towns in the province of Posen, seemingly backwaters in an eastern border province, thus became a nineteenth-century intellectual reservoir that fed German modernization. A new cultural interface had arisen where the Jewish tradition of text interpretation could, in a way never before possible, interact with Enlightenment thinking and the new *Bildung* ideal in the spirit of von Humboldt. The result of this cross-pollination had, as we have seen, international reach. The lively communication via Schlesischer Bahnhof had a powerful influence on the emergence of Swedish modernity, for example. Jewish Göteborg of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the synagogue consecrated in 1855 as its foremost monument, stands out in cultural respects as something that can be most closely likened to a suburb of liberal Jewish Berlin. Several of the congregation’s leading figures in the latter half



of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had roots in the province of Posen: the president of the congregation and patron of the arts Isaac Philip Valentin, the rabbi Moritz Wolff, and the cantor and musicologist Abraham Baer. Valentin came from Inowroclaw in the vicinity of Bromberg, Wolff from Meseritz/Miedzyrzecz in the western part of the province, and Baer from what can be called, in this context, the emblematic town of Filehne. They maintained their connections with family and colleagues in their area of origin and acted as connecting links between the peripheral and provincial – from a European standpoint – Göteborg milieu and the seething intellectual landscape of Berlin and the surrounding countryside. Their roles as communicators of culture were not confined to the Jewish context. In Göteborg, they were heavily involved in the emerging cultural public sphere of the city and were part of the social circle of the publisher, politician, and advocate of popular education S. A. Hedlund. Moritz Wolff's expertise and writings in religious studies became an important source of inspiration to the writer Viktor Rydberg's politically important stances on the issue of religious freedom. This milieu was of vital importance to the development of Swedish cultural studies and social sciences because, at an early stage, it conveyed new insights into the social and political relevance of the aesthetic media. Its foremost describer (and virtual archetype), the literary scholar Karl Warburg, is considered one of the founders of modern Swedish literary studies.

One result of this Swedish-Jewish collaboration that received international attention was Cantor Abraham Baer's remarkable book *Baal t'fillah oder der practische Vorbeter* (1877), a grandiose documentation of the traditional Jewish liturgy and its music based on Baer's experiences as a wandering apprentice cantor in the province of Posen around 1850. The incentive for the book project was the intense debate in Göteborg in the 1850s and 1860s on the aesthetic form of the Reform Jewish service. The work, whose publication was ultimately made possible through Hedlund's support, is a milestone in Jewish cultural history and is still used as a manual in the education of cantors in the US. While he was working on the book, his congregation sent Cantor Baer to Germany for further education, where he interacted with the circles around the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums. As a surprisingly professional, for its time, documentation of the oral musical tradition of a world religion, Baer's collection must also be regarded as a milestone in Swedish ethnomusicology.

While the texts of the Jewish service have been fixed in scripture for millennia, its musical format (melodies, recitatives, etc.) has long been a flexible and orally transmitted medium of communication that allowed the individual Vorbeter (the person leading the prayers) to put his personal stamp on liturgical song. Interest in this liturgical expression as Jewish music arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike his contemporary folkloristic and ethnological chroniclers, Baer rejects all too far-reaching conclusions about the ethnic symbolism of aesthetic expressions. His primary intent was not to parade the ancient, unique, and ethnically specific; he wanted to show what was actually used and how it was used. His interest is thus directed at the medium, at the communication itself and its mutable forms, in the spirit of Lazarus, Steinthal, and Simmel.<sup>20</sup> ✕

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## ERIC J. HOBSBAWM (1917–2012)

“Finally, the growth of direct communication between the socialist sector of the globe and the rest, if only in the form of journalism, tourism, cultural exchange and the creation of significant bodies of emigrants from socialist countries, influenced developments in Marxism inasmuch as it swelled the body of information about them accessible to Western Marxists, which could only be overlooked with increasing difficulty. If such countries were nevertheless still turned into models, sometimes almost utopian, of what Western revolutionaries aspired to, it was largely because Western revolutionaries knew little about them, and sometimes were in no position, or did not care, to learn more. The idealisation of the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution' by many Western revolutionaries had about as little to do with China as Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* had to do with Iran, or the eighteenth-century 'Noble Savage' with Tahiti. All used what purported to be the experience of a remote country for the social critique of another part of the world. Nevertheless, with the growth of communication and information, the tendency to seek utopia under some already fluttering red state flag diminished markedly. The period since 1956 is one in which most Western Marxists were forced to conclude that existing socialist regimes, from the USSR to Cuba and Vietnam, were far from what they would themselves have wished a socialist society, or a society in the process of constructing socialism, to be like. The bulk of Marxists were forced to revert to the position of socialists, everywhere before 1917. Once again they had to argue for socialism as a necessary solution for the problems created by capitalist society, as a hope for the future, but one only very inadequately supported by practical experience.

Conversely, the migration from socialist countries of 'dissidents' reinforced the old temptation to identify Marx and Marxism exclusively with such regimes, and especially with the USSR. It had once served to exclude from the Marxist community anyone who failed to give total and uncritical support to whatever came from Moscow. It now served those who wanted to reject all of Marx, since they claimed that the only road which led forward from the *Communist Manifesto*, or could lead forward, was that which ended in the gulags of Stalin's Russia or their equivalent in some other state governed by Marx's disciples. This reaction was psychologically comprehensible among disillusioned communists contemplating 'the god that failed'. It was even more comprehensible among intellectual dissidents in and from socialist countries, whose rejection of anything to do with their official regimes was total – starting with the thinker to whose theory these regimes appealed. Intellectually, it has about as much justification as the thesis that all Christianity must logically and necessarily always lead to papal absolutism, or all Darwinism to the glorification of free capitalist competition.”

**From *How to Change the World: Marx and Marxism 1840–2011*. London 2011: Little, Brown.**





# THE YOUNG AND THE OLD IN POLISH PHOTOGRAPHY

by **Per Eklöf**

**T**he Kraków Photomonth Festival was held for the first time in 2002, and internationally renowned photographers from many countries have been represented from the very start. Exhibitors in 2012 included Sally Mann (US), Viviane Sassen (Netherlands), Jason Evans (UK), and Sergey Bratkov (Ukraine). The main program has a new theme for each year. In some years, the theme has been photographs from various countries, such as the United Kingdom or Hungary, and one year the entire festival was devoted to Polish photography. The biggest attraction in 2012 is without a doubt the first major retrospective of the work of 88-year-old Jerzy Lewczyński.

Lewczyński, who was scheduled to personally introduce the show at the National Museum in Kraków, is in failing health. The organizers were unsure for a long time whether or not he would be able to attend. As late as the day before the show, I was informed there was only a 60 percent chance he would be there. But when the exhibition opened, there he was, escorted by an assistant and supporting himself with a cane. He sat down in front of the video cameras, photo flashes, and the festival audience. A book of Lewczyński's images (*Memory of the Image*) was published in conjunction with Kraków Photomonth and a queue of people wanting their books signed quickly formed in front of him. When he later gave a short speech to the audience, the speaker was alert and humorous. He said:

"I still take pictures. If I see something interesting, I take out my camera and shoot. And I want to give you all a little advice. Try to see the real meaning in what you are thinking about photographing. Don't photograph the surface – always look twice and always look carefully."

**In 1959, he joined** Zdzisław Beksiński and Bronisław Schlabs in organizing what came to be known as the "Anti-Photography Show". The exhibition did not receive much attention then, but over the years it has taken on great significance in the history of Polish photography. The three photographers all were opposed to the official aesthetic of the Communist Party, but

each had his unique mode of expression. Lewczyński showed "anti-photographic" pictures of handwritten notes, broken objects, and posters as well as his surrealism-inspired series "Wawel Heads" (Głowy wawelskie) – images of lifeless bodies and people with no faces. One of the most famous pictures in that series – included in the retrospective exhibition here in Kraków – depicts a worker covering his face with a shovel. The picture stands for an alternative truth opposed to the idea of the worker hero the state wanted to propagate. The photograph lays bare the human condition under communist rule and may be interpreted to mean that there are no individual heroes, only a faceless mass of people who work to survive.

**When I later** spoke to the president of the Photomonth, Tomasz Gutkowski, he called Lewczyński the most important thinker among Polish photographers since Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz. Witkiewicz made pioneering contributions as a photographer before the outbreak of World War II, but is best known as a writer and philosopher. "People in Poland have realized that Jerzy Lewczyński is a genius, but unfortunately he is not as well known in the rest of the world", Gutkowski said.

Lewczyński's photography and his thinking about photography have steadily evolved over his artistic career of more than sixty years. Following the anti-photography period, Lewczyński delved into what he calls the archeology of photography. In the book published in conjunction with the festival, *Memory of the Image*, Lewczyński writes: "Archeology of photography is what I call activities whose aim is the discovery,

examination, and interpretation of events, facts, situations that have taken place earlier in the so-called photographic past." One of his central ideas is that without photographs, we lose our history, without pictures we have no history. Remembering and preserving the past through pictures is something deeply human, something he has found in ancient cultures like that of Egypt in the Age of the Pharaohs.

**The photographs** hanging on the walls in the National Museum are from the period when he took pictures of large collections of things like spoons, shoes, or grenades; dating from his surrealist period, the images are pure and distilled portraits or reproductions of photographs taken by others that came his way by chance. The retrospective is a collection of many seemingly contradictory techniques and aesthetic approaches: documentary, artistically creative, conceptual. In an interview printed in the exhibition catalog, Lewczyński explains: "I use all the means I feel are appropriate to convey what I wish to express. I don't reflect on classification of pictures into different types in the moment when I am taking them."

The festival's artistic director Karol Hordziej believes it is a huge problem that photographers like Lewczyński, and Hordziej's personal favorite, Zofia Rydet, are unknown outside Poland. When the festival focused exclusively on Polish photography in 2008, Zofia Rydet's social-anthropological documentation, mainly of the Polish rural population 1978 to 1990, was one of five major exhibitions of Polish photography. A German collector of photographic works was asked at the festival why he owned almost no Polish photographs. The answer was that Polish photography is an unknown world. Hordziej said:

"I can understand why he thought that, and that is something we are trying to change, by making our photographic history known not only abroad, but also here in Poland. That is why we published a book last year, *Historie fotografii w Polsce 1839-2009* [The histories of photography in Poland, 1839-2009], in collaboration with the historian of photography Adam Mazur. It is the first book ever published on the history of Polish photography."

**"REMEMBERING AND PRESERVING THE PAST THROUGH PICTURES IS SOMETHING DEEPLY HUMAN."**



Starting in the mid-1950s, Jerzy Lewczyński started taking pictures of text in various forms. Under one of those pictures he sits down and expresses his ideas about photography with considered, precise words.



Photographer Mateusz Sarelo on his pictures with a sea motif: "I'm scared of a few days of thinking only about Her, and here I'll have the Baltic. My Baltic. Instead."



During the festival, visitors could vote on the "photo icons". One of the most famous images in Poland is from the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943.

Giving young Polish photographers a chance to show their works is very important to the festival arrangers. This year, out of 600 applicants, 10 photographers were selected to exhibit at galleries all over the city. The first show I went to see was Martyna Rudnycka's at a photographic gallery in the Kazimierz district. She is showing only a few pictures, some of which depict people with their faces turned away from the camera. Other images look at details of interiors or express motifs taken from nature, such as two straight tree trunks, one light and one dark. "I leave it up to the viewer to decide how to interpret the pictures", says Rudnycka. "Photographs should be seen only as impulses that can make people think." Her biggest concern was how the pictures should be presented. She finally settled on what she calls the light box technique, where the negative is illuminated on a framed backlit panel.

A couple of hundred meters down the road, I visited the next show. Mateusz Sarelo, 34, was educated in Warsaw, has exhibited previously, and has won awards including the Prix de la Photographie de Paris and the International Photo Award. He is showing pictures from a series first intended as a documentary project about the Baltic Sea. The images are displayed in the form of large, grainy paper photocopies, small unframed color photocopies, framed Polaroids,

and black-and-white photocopies stapled to the wall. The presentation is playful, but the pictures of deserted beaches, seabirds, lonely fishermen with lined faces, bodies of water, and skies convey a sense of desolation. Sarelo mused, "Well, no, this is not a documentary project about the Baltic Sea; it's about my ex-girlfriend. It's about loneliness, memories, and shattered love."

**The shows are hung** at about twenty museums and galleries, most of them spread around downtown, but a few are located a bit outside the city center. The show I visited two days later of the works of Laura Makabresku, a 25-year-old philosophy student at the University of Kraków, was in a gallery only a block away from Rynok Główny, the main square in the oldest district of the city.

Unlike all the other young photographers who exhibited during the festival, Makabresku is self-taught. Her color photographs of people and taxidermically stuffed animals have strong undertones of eroticism and violence and have garnered attention. She was interviewed by the Oxford journal *Trinity Arts Stack*, for instance.

The images are striking. When I asked her where she found her inspiration, she told me that it all began

with the stories her mother told her when she was a little girl. "I started writing poetry at a very young age, and the photographs are just another way to express the mood of the poems. I feel no hope; I can only express what I feel", she said.

When I went to the Photomonth Festival in 2011, the pictures that seemed to abide in my body the longest were taken by a young man – Piotr Zbierski – whose images are also disturbing. His artistic path differs from that of Makabresku: several years of photography school in Łódź, grants for photographic projects abroad, a stark, black and white aesthetic, and the use of a special but very simple plastic camera, the Holga, to get the effect he is after.

Two photographers with utterly different techniques and subjects. And yet, of all the young Polish photography I have taken in while attending two festivals in a row, it is the art of Makabresku and Zbierski that still resonates most deeply.

Karol Hordziej believes that a typical national photograph is a thing of the past:

"Contemporary Polish photographers rarely join together in groups, but Sputnik is one well-known example." ❌

The author is a Swedish freelance journalist and photographer.

**Representations of the Baltic Sea might possibly be the tale of an ex-girlfriend. Of these, there are many.**





Magdalena Drobczyk graduated in 2010 as the first student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice with a street art project. In this year's festival in Katowice she painted a wall in a road tunnel.

# STREET ART IN KATOWICE & KRAKÓW

by **Per Eklöf**

**T**he southern Polish cities of Katowice and Kraków have both made walls and public spaces available to street artists.

Michał Kubieniec is the art director of the second street art festival in Katowice. He says: "I like Polish street art for its diversity. To me, Polish artists like Goro, Brems, and Pikaso are among the most interesting because they are at the same time experimental and very street and dirty. But on the other hand I like Nawer, who makes great geometrical stuff, and Otecki whose art is inspired by Polish folk tales. In the future I think a girl from Katowice, Magdalena Drobczyk, with her surrealistic and abstract work, will be one of most important artists."

Lukasz Kałębasiak, one of the festival arrangers, works at a cultural institution, Katowice – City of Gardens. He explains, "Katowice is a gray industrial town that just a couple of years ago did not even have any graffiti to liven up the walls. We decided to bring color to the city, and thus the first street art festival came about."

**THE FESTIVAL WAS GIVEN** permission to allow street artists to paint certain walls and pedestrian underpasses in the city. The event was a success and festival number two was held in April of this year.

There is a vibrant graffiti culture in Kraków, one that comments on social and political issues in a

completely different way than in Katowice. Several galleries in Kraków have opened their doors to street artists, even as illegal street art continues to flourish in the city. The words ANTIFASCIST Kraków are sprayed on many walls; sometimes the ANTI has been tagged over. A picture of Che Guevara has been given a Hitler mustache; slogans like "stop gentrification" and "fuck the police" appear here and there. Painting graffiti on the walls is prohibited in Poland and it is removed sooner or later. But as in Katowice, there are legal walls in Kraków. ✖

The author is a Swedish freelance journalist and photographer.

**Political propaganda mustn't be replaced by commercial advertising only. Graffiti might be a solution.**





In the central districts of Kraków there is a lively graffiti milieu that has no equal in Katowice. It is especially in the old Jewish quarter, Kazimierz, and in the neighborhood that the Germans transformed into a Jewish ghetto during the World War II, Podgórze, that political graffiti is common. For about a year there has been a Facebook page, Krk:Loca(r)tor, with pictures of street art in Kraków. It contains information about where the pictures were taken and sometimes even who did the graffiti.



Anonymity is common in the world of street art. The identity of Vera King, who made a colorful debut in this year's street art festival in Katowice, is known only to a few.



Mona Tusz and Raspazjan both come from Silesia and sometimes work together – as in here, on a wall opposite the railway station in Katowice.



Raspazjan's esoteric aesthetic includes cats, female nymphs, and angels – and crafts such as this.



Martin Gobiewski exhibits works by Zbiok and Nawer in his gallery Nova Art in Kraków. In the 1980s, a painting of Lenin in a mohawk got him interested in graffiti.



Art by street art artists that is in galleries is not street art, according to Iga Urbanska and Aga Pudielko, who work at Nova Art.



"Street art is the easiest way to communicate in a city", says Magdalena Drobczyk. Here, we see one of her works in Katowice.



There are reminiscences of Ferdinand Leger in Zbiok's wall paintings, it has been said. This is painted legally on a wall in Kraków.

**Of course it's forbidden. Forbidden art exists anyhow, everywhere.**



# GATED COMMUNITIES

## POLAND HOLDS THE EUROPEAN RECORD IN HOUSING FOR THE DISTRUSTFUL

by **Peter Johnsson**

**M**arina Mokotów is on the outskirts of one of the most famous districts of Warsaw. After the war, high-rises were built here, most during Gomułka's time in power. They are characterized by the frugality of the five-year plans, with low ceilings and windowless kitchens. The new development included an industrial area just south of prewar Mokotów, but no heavy industry was located there, as in the northern part of the city.

Marina Mokotów covers part of the old industrial property. There are 1,800 housing units, single-family homes and apartments, on an area of 30 hectares. They were ready for occupation in 2006. The entire area is enclosed by walls or fences. There are two gated entrances that are guarded round-the-clock by uniformed guards in a sentry box next to the gate. The community is home to a restaurant, a couple of small grocery stores, a bank, hairdressers, a spa, and a few other businesses. There is an oblong lake in the middle. Water flows in from a manmade waterfall and then is pumped back again. A couple of bridges cross the narrow "lake" and there is a little playground on an island. It is this body of water that inspired the name – verging on the ironic – Marina Mokotów.

If you want to visit someone who lives in Marina Mokotów, you have to tell the guard at the gate whom

you intend to see. The guard usually calls the person to ask whether the guest is expected or welcome. Once inside, you walk along streets that all have names shown on every city map and are posted with ordinary municipal street signs. But none of the city maps indicate that these streets are inside a private enclave. The street names were chosen to instill a sense of security and nearness to a maritime realm: alongside Storm Street and Frigate Street, there are Paradise Street and Quiet Street. Every house or small group of houses is surrounded by a fence about two meters high. The gate is locked and CCTV-monitored. Behind the locked fence is a playground for the kids who live in the houses.

**The streets in** Marina Mokotów are nearly deserted, and even though it was a weekend when I visited the area, there were no crowds around the artificial lake. The residents are far from chatty. "Yes, we like it here", they say and hurry on. One of the store owners, who does not live in the neighborhood, is more outspoken:

"Not only do they have a wall around the whole place and guarded gates and locked fences around their own houses, when they park their bikes inside

the second fence, they lock them with heavy chains!"

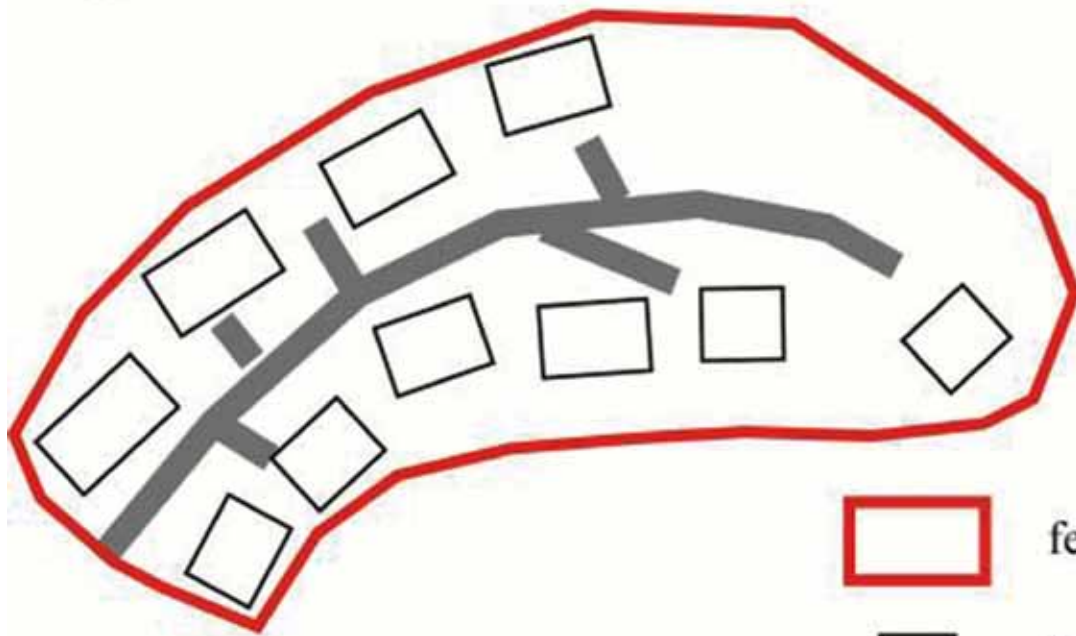
Sociological studies show that Poles on the whole are better off and happier with their lives than they were twenty years ago. In one survey undertaken by CBOS, an opinion institute, only 12 percent of respondents stated that they live in bad conditions, compared to 40 percent in 1993 and 30–35 percent throughout the 1990s. In the same survey, 39 percent said they live in good conditions and 48 percent said they have no complaints.<sup>1</sup>

When one of the first gated communities was built in Warsaw in the late 1990s – a neighborhood of single-family homes in the bedroom community of Piaseczno – the houses arrived from the United States ready to assemble. The *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper crowed that "an oasis of luxury and a slice of America" had now landed on Polish soil. The houses came from America for one reason: the contractor, Zbigniew Niemczycki, was a Polish businessman who had returned to his native country after a successful career in the US and founded Curtis International, a company that built one of the first commercial skyscrapers in Warsaw.

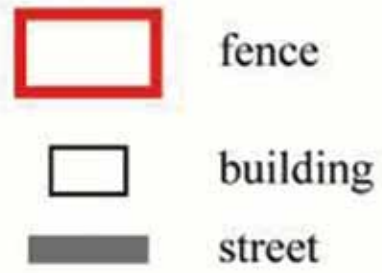
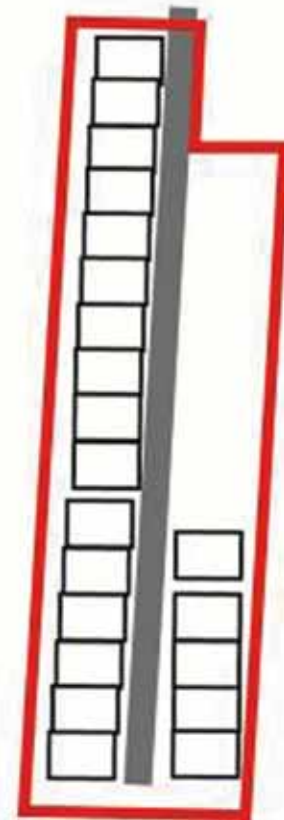
The flight from the central parts of the city and traditional outlying areas to newly developed bedroom communities – classic suburbanization – started in

**As soon as the wall in Europe had fallen, walls once again began to be built.**

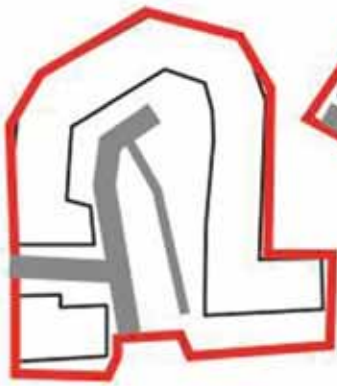
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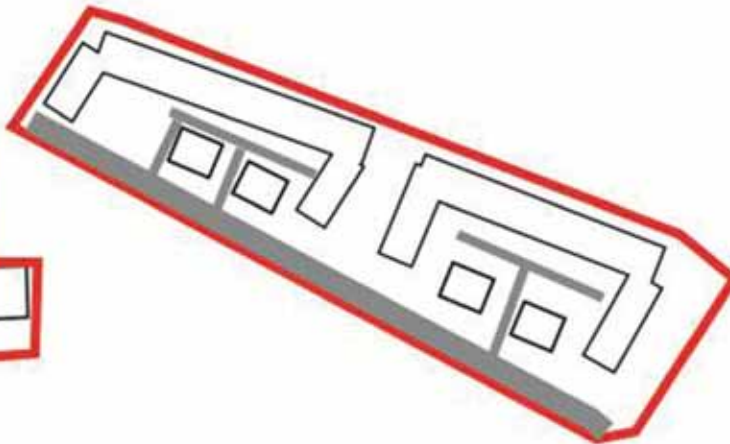
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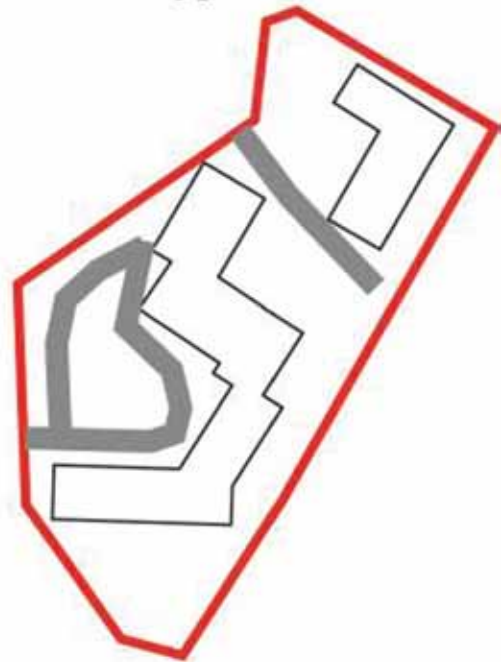
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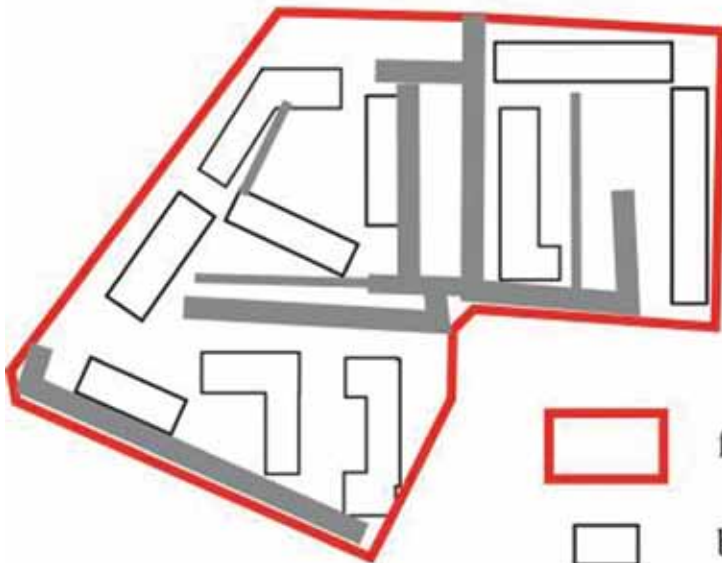
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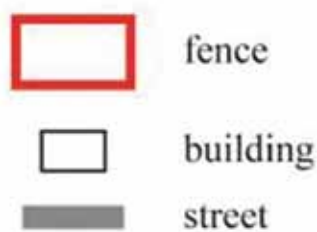
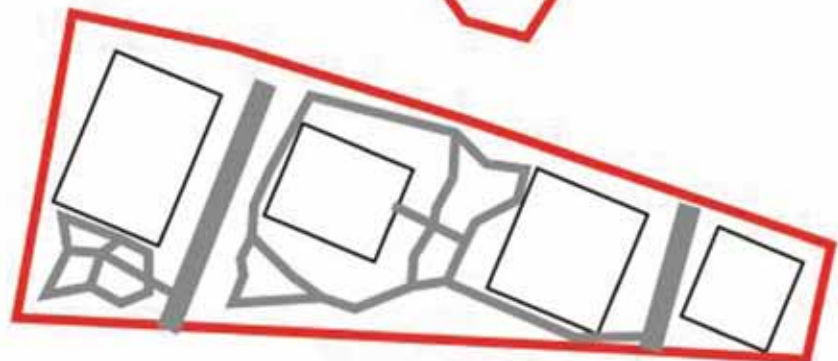
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the 1980s. The trend was fueled when free market forces were unleashed and foreign capital began flowing into the country. Capitalism created new opportunities for the building industry. State, municipal, and private lands quickly became the targets of speculation and substantial investments.

**South of the** historical Mokotów, a large neighborhood called Ursynów had been built in the 1970s on hitherto virgin land. In the first phase, ten-story high rises were erected. Further south, three- or four-story buildings are the norm. The buildings are of uniform architecture, defined by prefabricated concrete slabs. Large green areas, football fields, and playgrounds were laid out between the buildings, and they are still there. Schools, libraries, and cultural centers were included in urban planning. What they did not have was enough parking: the neighborhood was built with no thought for the surge in car use that happened in Poland in the 1970s and took off again after 1990.

In the early 1990s, private entrepreneurs started buying farmland between Ursynów and Las Kabacki (the Kabacki Forest) nature reserve. New houses popped up like mushrooms on this land over a period of twenty years. Architecture was varied and concrete slabs nowhere to be seen. Instead of unrelenting gray, the façades were in various colors. Parking was built into the projects, usually in the form of underground garages with elevators up to the building stairwells. There were no green expanses, but the narrow strips of grass that often surrounded the buildings were neat and tidy and the sidewalks smoothly paved. Debates raged in the newspapers and trade papers as to what should happen to the old neighborhoods: Were they carcinogenic? How long would it take before the concrete slabs started to crumble and the buildings fall like houses of cards?

The new district that grew quickly south of the “communist” Ursynów was named after the nature reserve: Kabaty. It took a while for sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers to realize that what was being built often added a new element to the cityscape: the gated community.<sup>2</sup>

During the initial phase, according to Jacek Gądecki, this was seen “as the logical outcome of undefined events and [...] the advent and existence of this type of community was regarded as something normal and not ascribed any particular significance.”<sup>3</sup>

A few years into the 2000s, some professional analysts began to draw attention to the negative consequences of this trend. A critical breakthrough in the national discussion happened, Gądecki argues, when Henrik Werth, a German architecture student from Berlin, arrived in Warsaw in 2004 and drew a map of gated communities. There was one such at home in Berlin (Arkadien), but here he found more than 200, almost three times as many as in all of France, where there were 72 of them at the time according to the statistics.<sup>4</sup>



The gated community Marina Mokotów in Warsaw is built around a water reservoir.

Photo: [www.apaka.com.pl](http://www.apaka.com.pl)

Although most gated communities are located in the south, where available farmland and the absence of industry have made it natural for the city to expand, later cartography has complicated the picture. Magdalena Górczyńska has shown a substantial increase in gated communities in Bielany in the northwest, which was formerly regarded as a working-class neighborhood. Two thirds of the housing built in Bielany in the 2000s has been either gated or guarded. Górczyńska reports that old neighborhoods in this district have also been fenced in.<sup>5</sup>

At present, there are probably more than four hundred gated communities in Warsaw and an estimated 75 percent of all new homes on the market in Warsaw are in gated communities. No other European capital has numbers this high. The tendency is the same in other larger Polish cities. Dominika Polanska has investigated the tri-city area of Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia and Paulina Tobiasz-Lis has studied the traditional working class city of Łódź. And there is a similar trend in other countries in the former Eastern Bloc.<sup>6</sup>

**How should this** strong need to lock oneself in and build walls around one's home be explained?

References to the United States are common. Most Polish studies cite Setha Lowe's *Behind the Gates* and Edward J. Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder's *Fortress America*. Interestingly, the rapid development of gated communities in the US is also associated with the 1990s and 2000s. Lowe states: “The number of people estimated to be living in gated communities in the United States increased from four million in 1995, to eight million in 1997, and to sixteen million in 1998.” A study performed in conjunction with a census in 2001 showed that 6 percent of the US population then lived in such settlements, or almost 20 million Americans. In several US states, current estimates are that at least 40 percent of new housing units are in gated communities.<sup>7</sup>

Blakely and Snyder, like Lowe, differentiate between three different types: lifestyle communities, prestige communities, and security zone communities. Lifestyle communities are neighborhoods that appeal to people who want to live near or with people who have a similar lifestyle and who enjoy roughly the same things. The first gated communities in the US arose in the Sunbelt and were often connected to resorts or golf courses. When gated communities first crossed the Atlantic, this is the type established in southern Europe. According to Blakely and Snyder, prestige communities are now the fastest-growing type in the US:

**Their gates symbolize distinction and prestige and create and protect a secure place on the social ladder. They lack the recreational amenities of the lifestyle communities, often differing little from a standard residential subdivision except for their gates.**

Security zone communities have arisen due to “fear of crime and outsiders”. Lowe's study undertaken in the US in the mid 1990s was based on interviews with residents of a gated community on the outskirts of New York and three communities in San Antonio, Texas. Respondents said that fear of crime and a longing for safe surroundings were the primary reasons they had chosen to live behind walls or fences.

**Peter Stoyanov and** Klaus Frantz have analyzed a corresponding development in Bulgaria – mainly Sofia – and noted that gated communities, as in the Soviet Union, existed for a select group of the communist nomenklatura. It is difficult to correlate this to Poland. While it is true that certain streets in central Warsaw like Aleja Przyjaciół and Aleja Róż were mainly the preserve of high-ranking party officials,





A gated community in Bielany, in the northwest of Poland. This area was formerly regarded as a working class neighborhood.

Photo: www.ugk.hom.pl

these streets were also home to art and culture workers and the intelligentsia, who could not be associated with the machinery of power. The streets were not closed off and there were no walls around the buildings. An enclosed house was indeed built on Parkowa Street under Gomulka, which is still the prime minister's residence. In the adjacent building at Sulkiewicza Street 3, apartments were reserved for government and politburo members and security guards. The first party leader to use the house on Parkowa Street was not Gomulka, but his successor Edward Gierek. Gomulka preferred his house on Frascatti Street, a pattern that was more the rule than the exception for high-ranking politicians and officials in those years. Minister of Internal Affairs Czesław Kiszczak lived – and still lives – in his relatively modest house in Mokotów. So did General Wojciech Jaruzelski, whose house is in another part of Mokotów. As a rule, high-ranking officials had single-family homes with fenced-in yards and some kind of security monitoring, and government and party leaders had enclosed holiday resorts at their disposal. There were special – strictly delimited – neighborhoods for military personnel near places regarded as strategic objects. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see any direct connection between these phenomena and the gated communities currently being built in Poland.

Certainly, some areas of Warsaw are more attractive than others, and thus gated communities are more common there. But “despite the existence in Warsaw of areas with a relatively uniform social structure, the nature of the city is not one of social-spatial zones characteristic of Western European cities; the picture of Warsaw is instead ‘mosaic-like’.” As Anna Gąsior-Niemiec, Georg Glasze, and Robert Putz have noted, the “city as a whole is being transformed into a field of complex mazes in which buildings are isolated from their surroundings”.<sup>8</sup>

There have been few field studies of gated com-

munities in Poland, and they are usually based on relatively limited interview material and discussions in the press and social media. In these studies, residents readily report fear of crime and the desire for personal safety for themselves and their children as reasons for choosing to settle there. Opinion polls show that the proportion of Poles who believe “Poland is a safe country to live in” declined drastically in the early 1990s, from 75 percent to about 20 percent, and began to rise again in the middle of the decade. According to a 2008 CBOS study, a full 87 percent of Poles feel safe in their neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup> Crime statistics indicate that Poland is a safe country compared to most other countries in Europe. That includes Warsaw, where the burglary rate per 1,000 inhabitants does not differ from other capital cities in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Safety as a motive for settling in gated communities must be critically examined:

Although many researchers maintain on the basis of surveys that the main incentive which motivates people to reside in gated communities is the threat/insecurity factor, it seems that this slightly exaggerated assertion should be commented on and corrected taking into account other analytical data and tools focusing, among other things, on the semantics of signs in space and discourse analysis.<sup>11</sup>

The wall or the fence [...] is also perceived as a boundary, in the sense that in the minds of residents, it connotes new norms and constitutes protection of privileges. [...] The boundary often cited as a security requirement is actually an attempt to separate the space in order to gain complete control over reality, a flight from chaos, and a foundation upon which to build personal identity.<sup>12</sup>

If the strong growth of gated communities in Poland is closely associated with the new middle class created since the fall of the old regime, sociologists argue that the explanations of the phenomenon must be sought in what is constitutive of this class or social group. In this context, Bohdan Jałowiecki makes reference to globalization and the transformation of Warsaw into a genuine metropolis.

At the end of the 1980s, about a third of the labor force in the capital was still employed in industry. Today, that proportion has been cut in half. In its place, a number of new occupations have developed in Polish society and given rise to a “metropolitan class”. Jałowiecki refers to Alain Bourdin's idea that the metropolis is constantly in motion, it splits and it fragments: while the city created “freedom”, the metropolis is creating “a world of isolated individuals”.<sup>13</sup>

**This new class** is well-educated and its members have relatively high incomes, but they generally lack the property that was the hallmark of the traditional bourgeoisie. It is more mobile and thus has looser ties to its home districts than the old middle class. It is consumption-oriented to a great extent, and “new kinds of individualism, self-actualization, and creativity are essential characteristics of this class”.<sup>14</sup> It has, according to Jałowiecki, deliberately set itself apart from the rest of society behind walls and fences. His explanation draws a parallel to postmodernist theories of the current phase of development of Western civilization. One of the prominent theorists is sociologist Zygmunt Bauman:

Originally constructed to provide safety for all their inhabitants, cities are associated these days more often with danger than they are with security. [...] The war against insecurity, and particularly against dangers and risk to personal safety, is now waged *inside* the city, and inside the city battlefields are set aside and front lines are drawn. Heavily armed trenches (impassable approaches) and bunkers (fortified and closely guarded buildings or complexes) aimed at separating, keeping away, and barring the entry of strangers, are fast becoming one of the most visible aspects of contemporary cities.<sup>15</sup>

Bauman finds the cause in the adverse consequences of globalization – in what he calls “the passage from the solid to a liquid phase of modernity”, where “social forms [...] can no longer keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them”, and therefore cannot “serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life strategies”. In this “liquid modern” era, power and politics have been separated and “community [...] sounds increasingly hollow”. This is a world that “promotes division, not unity, and puts a premium on competitive attitudes, while degrading collaboration and teamwork”.<sup>16</sup>

This fragmented, individualized, liquid time engenders, by extension, what Bauman has called liquid fear – fear of failure and fear that the foundations of life will crack. A great paradox of liquid modernity, Bauman writes, is that people in the west are living in

**Inaccessibility has become a status marker. Those who lack the most are thus perhaps all the more unprotected.**



the safest, most comfortable and benign world that any human being has ever experienced, yet feel more threatened, unsafe, and afraid than people have in most historic societies.<sup>17</sup> Once again, he finds the cause in the negative consequences of globalization:

**Both the village and the city are an arena for forces that reach far beyond their borders and the processes set in motion by these forces cannot be understood and cannot be controlled by the inhabitants of the village or the city and not even by those who initiated them.**<sup>18</sup>

**The local** “cannot be regarded only as an answer to global processes”, writes Jacek Gądecki. Looking at the process that produces, reproduces, and consumes the space and especially the social interpretation of these as global phenomena is “certainly justified, but also dangerous”, he argues in an indirect polemic with Bauman.<sup>19</sup> Gądecki uses four components to address the Polish discussion of gated communities: fear and safety, prestige, aesthetics, and class identity.

He also finds that the safety of gated communities is important to their residents, although it never seems to be connected to any direct fear of what is going on in society as a whole. The matter of prestige is related primarily to how the communities were marketed, often with intimations that they are peaceful areas created for and/or populated by people who belong to a certain social class.

In the first phase, the aesthetics were the dominant element of the discourse: the architecture, the building materials, the planning of the immediate surroundings including the sidewalks; everything that definitively set the new neighborhoods apart from the gray and often dilapidated buildings in the “communist” neighborhoods. In the second phase, aesthetics first gave way to the issue of safety, but later returned as a dominant element. The aesthetics in a “well-organized community are one of the most important factors that separate it from the surrounding urban chaos”.<sup>20</sup>

Gądecki contends that the aesthetics of the living environment are part of the identity of the new middle class. He uses the concept of the visualized landscape

– which encompasses architecture, natural surroundings, amenities, beauty, and peacefulness. The *visualized landscape* not only distills the “composition” itself, but also the individual’s subjective relationship to it.<sup>21</sup>

If sociologists like Jałowiecki have emphasized the fluid and weak ties of the metropolitan class to their local milieu, Gądecki gives a different and more contradictory picture of the identity of the new class. Like other analysts, he emphasizes the mobility of this class as a distinctive element of the new lifestyle. Without an understanding of the implications of mobility, Gądecki argues, it is impossible to understand what gated communities mean to this new middle class: “[I]t is primarily this mobility that gives the separation meaning”.<sup>22</sup>

Life to a large extent is realized outside the gated community. The mobility covers work, leisure, the whole lifestyle. In that light, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of a seemingly banal thing like a garage. Paradoxically enough, according to Gądecki, the other face of mobility is that people seek out their new identity in relation to the place in which they live. In this way, the visualized landscape becomes a spatial manifestation of social relations. One can go so far as to say that the visualized landscape “constitutes an ideology, concentrated to the degree that it can be seen in materialized form”.<sup>23</sup>

The visualized landscape is a product in a changeable market, but it is a product that when consumed is transformed by the consumer: “Under circumstances in which identity is strongly associated with ownership of products and consumption, the visualized landscape becomes a way to express personal identity; the kinship with a concrete visualized landscape may thus become one of the most important markers of class identity.”<sup>24</sup> When Gądecki summarizes the significance of gated communities to the emergence of Poland’s new middle class, he refers, not surprisingly, to Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of *milieu* and *habitus*.

Jacek Gądecki has pointed out fundamental local factors for the transformation of housing that began in Poland in the second half of the 1980s and was given a huge push forward when free market forces were unleashed in the early 1990s. The significance of the aesthetics and the visualized landscape to this

transformation of Polish society is not limited to the new neighborhoods or gated communities. It can be seen in the countryside and can be applied to the significant “landscape change” that large parts of the old high-rise neighborhoods have undergone: few high-rises in the vast Ursynów with its 130,000 inhabitants now boast gray concrete slabs. The buildings have been insulated, plastered, and painted; the elevators have been replaced along with the entrance doors, alongside which one now finds entry phones, sometimes with video, just like in the new neighborhoods.

Jacek Gądecki argues that applying the American pattern to Polish reality was not easy or even possible. However, one fundamental question remains: Why are gated communities so popular in Poland? The new middle class could very well create their own milieu and their differentiating habitus without building walls and fences.

**The results of** the first more comprehensive field study of gated communities were not published until the autumn of 2011. The study, led by Dominik Owczarek, was based on a survey of 415 people, of whom 265 live in gated communities and 150 live in open communities in Warsaw. The nine gated communities as well as the open communities were selected to ensure the representation of widely varied city districts. In brief, the study showed that those who lived in gated communities were “younger on average, had lived for a shorter time in their neighborhoods, perceived a higher degree of safety, were less active in the community, possessed less local social capital, had a stronger connection to their apartments but were less strongly connected to the city, and finally, had a more favorable attitude towards gated communities than the people who lived in open communities”.<sup>25</sup>

Average age in the respective areas did not differ by much. The 22–31 age cohort was exactly equally represented, at 32 percent, in both types of community. Not unexpectedly, the 32–41 age cohort was proportionately somewhat larger and the 52–61 cohort smaller in the gated communities. There was no marked difference in level of education: 58.5 percent of those in the gated communities and 52.3 percent of those in the open communities had university degrees.

To be sure, people who lived in the gated communities earned more than those who lived in open communities, but income disparities were significant in both cases and the proportion of low-income residents – people with wages of less than 2,000 zloty per month – was essentially the same (12.8 percent in the gated communities and 15.5 percent in open communities). The biggest difference between the two types of areas had to do with those at the top of the pay scale. In the gated communities, 18.2 percent earned between 7,500 and 10,000 zloty per month, while only 10.0 percent in the open communities were in this income bracket. The study unfortunately does not report income differences between the same age cohorts in the different types of communities. Nonetheless, these figures take the wind out of a commonplace assertion that the people who have partitioned themselves off from the rest of society are a uniform and affluent group in terms of income and education.<sup>26</sup>

The study further shows that it is difficult to make any claims of animosity between the groups in the two

Photos: Articulo – Journal of Urban Research



Fenced green space in front of a building in a gated housing estate in Bielany.



One of the gates in the housing estate in Bielany.

**He who is placed outside the wall must accept that it has been erected. How does the person who lives inside react when it is demolished?**



Marina Mokotów in Warsaw was constructed between 2003 and 2006.

Photo: www.apaka.com.pl

types of communities. A tiny minority in both said that they felt rancor or resentment against residents of the other type of community. One third of the respondents in the gated communities had a favorable attitude towards the open neighboring communities, while 64.4 claimed a “neutral” attitude. Twenty percent of those who lived in the open communities had a positive view of the gated neighboring communities, while 51.3 took a neutral position. A full 30 percent of the respondents in the open communities had a favorable attitude towards the gated communities in general. Only 20 percent believed that gated communities are a bad thing.<sup>27</sup>

**Dominik Owczarek** concludes that “the actual physical separation may *not* be an important factor in people’s evaluations of their own housing”.<sup>28</sup> This field investigation thus undermines the findings reached earlier by several Polish sociologists that there is a strong opposition between the residents inside and outside the “walls”, perhaps most clearly formulated by Anna Gąsior-Niemiec, Georg Glasze, and Robert Pütz:

[I]n the analyzed discourse the dichotomy assumes the shape of aggressive, mutual exclusion, verging on negation of the right of the other to exist.<sup>29</sup>

The Polish reality appears to be somewhat more complicated, and if such a large proportion of the population in Poland has a positive attitude towards gated communities, perhaps this visualized landscape is the hallmark of the ideology that a significantly broader

group in Polish society carries with them throughout their lives. In other words: Are there other and more fundamental structural changes? Must one actually look back in history to understand this Polish pattern and behavior?

If one were to set off on a journey through Polish terrain, visiting small towns and villages, it would be hard to avoid noticing that virtually every house and its plot of land are surrounded by a high fence or wall with a gate that can be locked. One sees this pattern even in villages where every villager knows everyone else. Remarkably, there are also many undeveloped plots of land that are carefully enclosed.

Several studies confirm that Poland is a country whose people have little trust in the authorities. In the aforementioned EU study of crime which made it clear that Poland is a relatively safe country, Poland ended up at the bottom of the statistics when it came to trust in the work of the police.<sup>30</sup>

Other studies indicate that Poles have little trust in their fellow citizens. The sociologist Piotr Sztompka states that “in countries characterized by a high level of trust (Norway, Sweden, Holland, Japan, the US, Germany), people act according to the motto that ‘you should trust others as long as they are not proven fraudsters,’ while in low-trust countries, people act according to the motto that ‘everyone else is a potential thief, swindler, taker of bribes, or secret agent unless he or she has proven otherwise’”. These differences are inscribed in the “collective memory of the given culture”, Sztompka argues. The level of trust or distrust in a society is usually dependent upon how deeply rooted democratic values and democratic traditions are in each country. Sztompka talks about “cumulative social trust”, but also says that sudden

upheavals in society can lead to further declines in already weak trust: “a typical example of this is the situation in the post-communist countries, where we can note several types of trauma.”<sup>31</sup>

**Kazimierz Sowa**, professor of sociology at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and head of the Department of Studies of the Civil Society, is attempting in a series of lectures on the public space and Polish civil society, entirely in the spirit of Sztompka, to find historical roots for both the lack of trust in Polish society and the general weakness of the civil society. There has never been any fundamental trust in public institutions or representatives of power in Polish society, Sowa argues. Nor has “civil society” created in Poland from time to time ever resembled civil societies that characterizes modern Europe, where they early on became part of a functioning social organism. In Poland, civil society “arose and was organized either in parallel or in opposition to the existing state”.<sup>32</sup> Cooperation in this version of civil society was not based on any trust in public institutions or fellow citizens. Trust was reserved for individuals who were part of the family, the circle

of friends, or otherwise reliable people. This “dual” society was even a constitutive element of the social economy in the former regime, when people had to get things done through private networks.

**On my way** to the airport, passing one gated community after another, the taxi driver unknowingly makes a connection to Kazimierz Sowa and Piotr Sztompka:

“My dear man, last week I had a customer who lives here and complained that he has been fenced in. It was, he said, a company that manufactures fencing that had persuaded the chairman of the housing association to put the question on the agenda of the annual meeting. My customer voted against it, but a majority of the members at the meeting were for it. They let themselves be persuaded by the chairman.

“You understand what it was all about”, says the driver, and rubs his thumb and forefinger together: money, money, money.

There is no simple answer to the question of why gated communities are so infinitely more widespread in Poland than in any Western European country. Each of the theories recounted probably contains part of the answer. Nor – however difficult it might be to see anything positive for Polish society in this development – is there any simple answer to the question of the long-term consequences for modern Poland. ❌



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## ARCHIVAL PROGRESS

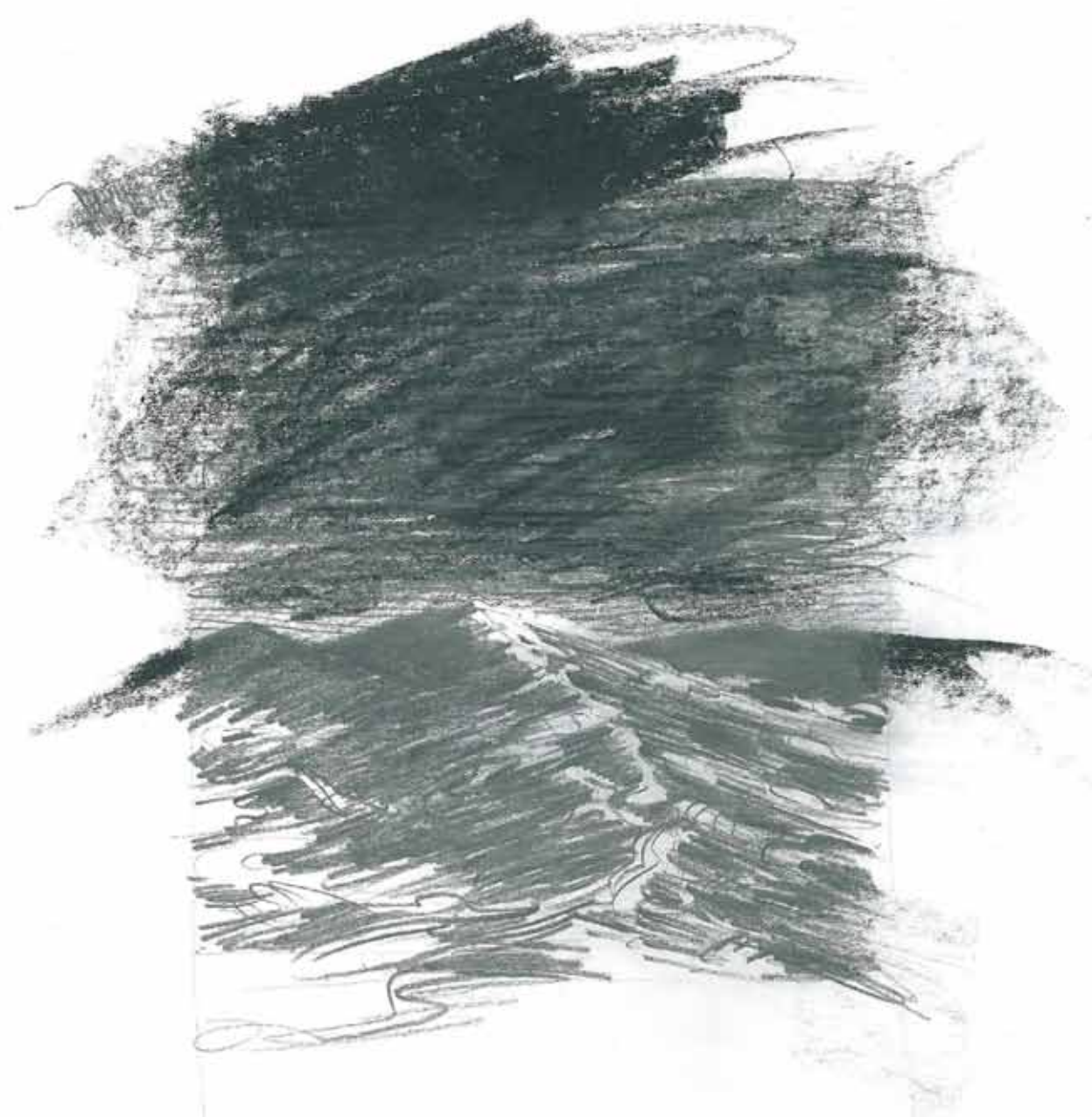
East View Information Services has entered an exclusive distribution agreement with Yale University Press to launch its recently developed Stalin Digital Archive (SDA). East View assumes responsibility for SDA-related marketing, sales, provisioning, and support of institutional and individual users.

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A dark cloud over  
dangerous waters.

# GUESTS OF REALITY

DIARY FROM A PASSAGE THROUGH THE GULF

by **Anders Björnsson** illustration **Aino Winard**

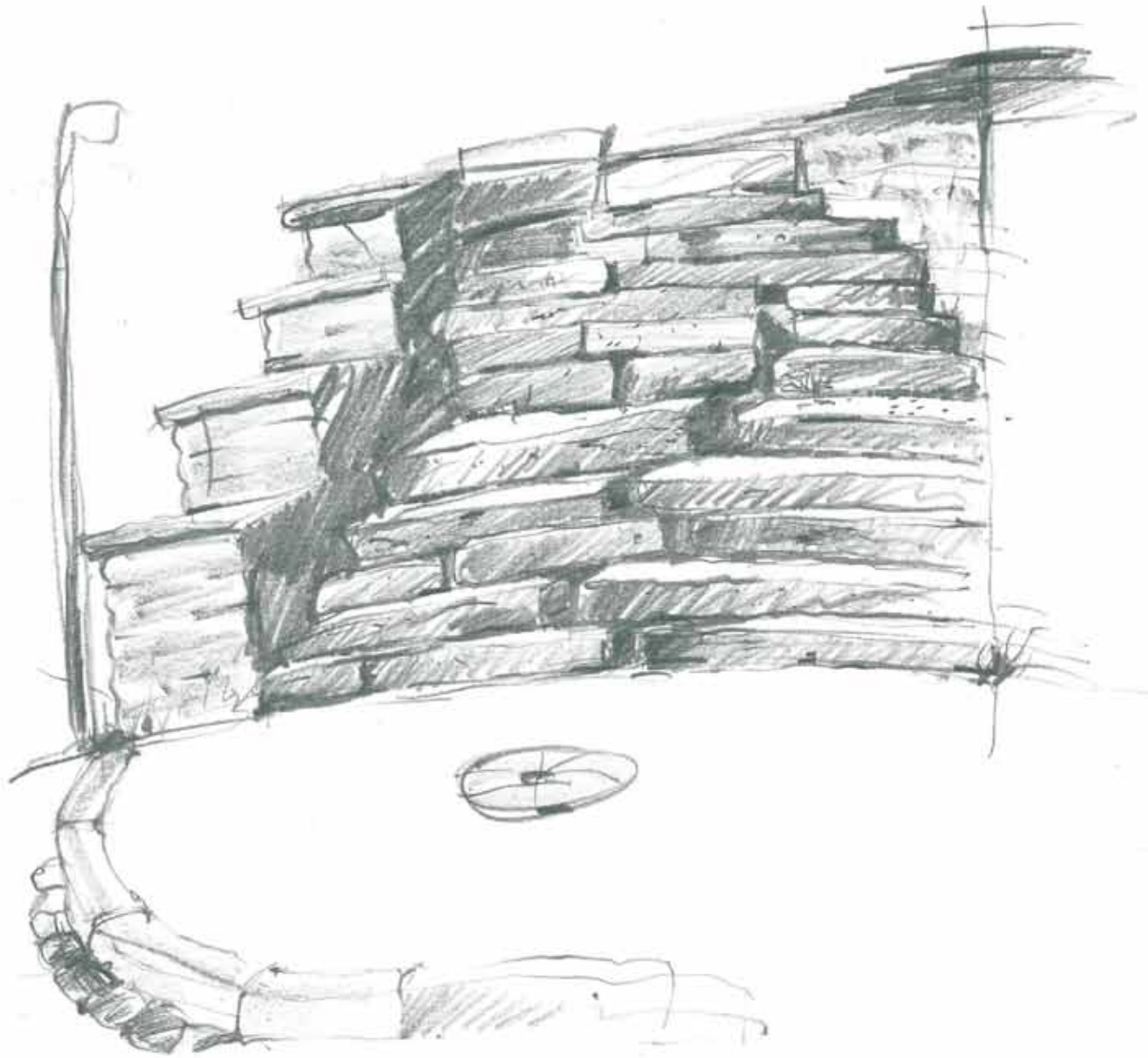
**T**he disaster has etched itself in our memory. It was monumental and it became a monument: 852 dead in a single hour – a terrible toll in peacetime. When the *Estonia* foundered at about ten after two in the morning in late September, eighteen years ago, time stopped for a while. For so many, it stopped forever. A flora of stories began to take root; the stuff of legend became vast, indefinite. An experienced ethnologist, Wolter Ehn, died in the waves. He is remarkably anonymous on the web. I did not know him and would have liked to ask him

so much. He had published village ordinances, legal statutes of sorts, from the central Swedish provinces – rules for how the community should be organized to give the individual tiller of the soil more latitude, as private initiative was to stimulate the growth of production. And what then does one find? That the body of regulations expanded. This was not deregulation, there were new and more regulations, replacing older ones. An agrarian revolution was on its way. The transition from feudalism to capitalism was to be completed, a formidable system change in the countryside.

The *Estonia* sank on the verge of another system shift. I had sailed the Stockholm–Tallinn route just a few weeks before the ship went down, accompanied by my children. We had sat at a diner downtown, which still smelled of scouring powder from the era of real socialism, sharing a table with a young cultural geographer who had begun digging around in the estate archives. She wanted to study the land reforms and how the latifundia economy successively broke down: first the well-to-do farmer class arose when serfdom was eradicated; later it was the smallhold-

**In the wave of a peacetime disaster. Traffic never ceased – not military, not civilian.**





Part of the city wall  
of Old Tallinn.

ers' turn after the First World War in an Estonia that was to be purged of the German landed nobility and become ethnically homogeneous, to a certain degree.<sup>1</sup> The central features had been grasped for a long time, of course, but how did this play out at the level of the village? I got a foretaste of the massive research explosion that the end of the system conflict between some form of socialism and some form of capitalism would set off. Curiosity, a certain intellectual obtrusiveness. I got the young woman's card, but I never got in touch. The disaster intervened; it built a mental wall.

The waters of the Baltic have always been busy – and dangerous, because this inland sea is so shallow, so exposed to high seas and storms. Peasant fishermen and other ordinary people preferred to sail through the archipelagos where they could seek lee and safe haven. As we know, peasant navigation was a huge historic project. It spawned the shipping partnerships of Åland, as well as the Ålandic sailing fleet, which became a master of the oceans in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and some way into the 20<sup>th</sup>, an economic engine of rare power. It made the Ålanders independent and cocky; they still do not want to call themselves Finns, nor Swedish-speaking Finns, after they only against their will joined the Republic of Finland after a century or so as subjects of the Russian tsar, and even

though Swedish is their mother tongue. That the Baltic Sea is difficult to navigate has not stopped the shipping trade between Helsinki and Stockholm from being the busiest in the world in terms of passenger numbers (apart from short daily commuting routes, such as that over the Bosphorus). For a long time, Finnish shipyards lived high on compensation trade with the Soviet Union, a leftover of the reparations and compulsory supply after the Second World War.

Later during the Cold War, the Baltic was split in two: the graveyard of sailors and soldiers and civilians, refugees, and garden-variety criminals became a political grave. The spy planes flew high above the water; beyond the east coast, armed desperados fought in the woods for a decade or so in what was regarded by the new rulers as pure terrorism, triggered by the secret services in the not-so-neutral neighboring states.<sup>2</sup> In the final phase of this epoch of rival superpowers, the *Estonia* came to be regarded as a lifeline by many Estonians on both sides of the invisible border. Border between what? Between good and evil? Between the law, meek and mild, and unreasonable privation? How many such borders must we not cross before the sailing is over! Good and evil are found in the fabric of everyone's existence, in all varieties of life. Now that we have once again embarked upon a journey in the

Gulf of Finland, for a pure and noble purpose, a small band of artists, writers, journalists, poets, and actors, the memory of the disaster is burned into every retina. We know where we were when we heard about it (the kids were just about to be driven to school), just as we Swedes know what we were doing when Prime Minister Olof Palme was murdered, a little more than eight years earlier. Now the wall has cracked, networks have been established, and plain words have begun to be spoken.

The shipwreck was not adequately investigated. Accident investigation boards lost papers and prohibited diving expeditions. In some picture series saved for posterity, one sees holes in a damaged hull, as if it had been blown open by a detonation. It has never been possible to dismiss the attack theory (since it has not been disproven).<sup>3</sup> And so it has been loaded with material content: gun-running, secret agents, corruption in the ports. Salvage was the initial official policy, promises were made. In Sweden – the *Estonia*, once a Finnish ship, was jointly owned by the Estonian state and a privately owned Swedish shipping company, and Swedes were an overwhelming majority among the dead – the coalition government of Carl Bildt was on its last legs. And then the tide turned. The policy reversal had elements of *Staatsräson* and public lies. If attackers were

**Neutrality (for some) was a choice, not a reality. The border was the reality, not a choice (for anyone).**

involved, it would deeply overshadow that Norwegian mass murderer, who also preferred to operate near open water. But can one make such comparisons? Engage in victim counting. Hitler versus Stalin. Numbers speak their own language. Is it *our* language? Do we have any special reason, all our own, to defend ourselves? Fact against fact, myths against counter-myths. If the West had dropped an atom bomb on China in the Fifties, a few hundred million Chinese would have perished – and there were plans to make that happen.<sup>4</sup>

It is a beautiful, cloudy autumn evening. The risk of rough seas is very real. A number of decided opinions accompany us on the journey. It will take us a full working week, they will gather around the dinner table. I decide early on to keep a sort of ship's log. There is no one to report to. The map is familiar to us who live in northern Europe: skerries and sunken rocks are the constant unknowns.

**T**he dark is never as dark as on the water, noise never as noisy as on the lower deck, the prostitutes never as obvious as in a shipboard bar. They cannot be kicked out, where would they go? The bar is the only place I can smoke a Montecristo. The mild fall night shows off its best features once we have left Kapellskär, one of the ports of departure to Mariehamn on Åland and then Nådendal, north of Turku. During the interwar years, Greater Finland politicians had intended to build a major international port in that city. The plans came to naught and the sea approach has been essentially protected from industrial land and wasteland. It is surrounded by a deep, verdant inner archipelago that we now turn our backs on, since we are heading for Tallinn. The autumn warmth is particularly sweet because the mosquitoes – the particular seasonal plague of northern peoples – have not bothered to come along. The menu is not reliable, it turns out, and even in Old Town Tallinn near the parliament building and the main Orthodox cathedral we will find restaurants that cannot serve any meat, fish, or vegetables listed on the menu and so, as an ethnographic observer, one can seriously question the sanctioned truth that the shortage economy was a logical consequence of the planned economy and general dictatorial commando politics.

Lack of organizational talent is found in many systems. The crux is the human weakness for doing one's share with the least possible effort. Max Weber, standard-bearer of rational bureaucracy, exerted himself to the edge of exhaustion, became mute, unproductive, impotent – but as the first Russian revolution approached in 1905, he began studying like a madman again, learned Russian at an advanced age, as Marx did, became furiously active, and acquired a wealthy mistress (however that might have happened), and, after the First World War, was making plans for a political career but was struck down by a common illness.<sup>5</sup> Weber would have become apoplectic if he had seen the real, existing market economy in all its anarchistic irrationality, the “freedom revolution” of the Eastern European ilk. And one has to wonder how he would have applied his theory of charismatic leadership to the no-longer-new yet still young states in the former Soviet empire. The multiparty regime under the Weimar Republic would certainly not have

been to the liberal Weber's taste. What would he have recommended? How would he have felt about Hitler? His documented contempt for Poles, at any rate, did not bode well.

Now we make our way through Old Town Tallinn, still unspoiled, like so many other town centers in old Eastern Europe. It lies on a hill, Cathedral Hill, as in so many other old Hanseatic League cities like Tartu and Vyborg, for instance. The ring wall is relatively intact, unlike the one in Visby on Gotland and, also unlike the one in Visby, its primary defense faces the sea, from which invasions could be expected. In Visby the defense faces inland and the peasant population the Hanseatic merchants did their best to exploit, the peasants who saw their greatest enemy in this foreign merchant capital and not the Danish or the Swedish crown. A globalization before globalization: the merchants' chief competitors were knightly orders of various denominations. Centralized nation-states put a stop to this widespread smash-and-grab for a time. It was, if you like, a peace project aimed at the robber baron system, the northern European version of the Camorra.

The noble houses here are of modest size, in harmony with the surrounding buildings, mainly the homes of the middle-class. A few stand out, like Stenbock House. Like so much else, it was nationalized after 1919, and after 1991, relatives of the last German-Baltic family to own it tried to get restitution. On quite a few plaques one sees other “Swedish” noble names, including that of Wrangel, which became infamous in Central Europe after Marshal Carl Gustaf Wrangel stormed and devastated Prague in the final phases of the Thirty Years' War. If he had lived today and stood on the wrong side of the showdown between good and evil, between Washington and its enemies, he would have stood trial in The Hague. But at that time Stockholm was trying to be a Washington, albeit in miniature. And so he is honored to this day. An Obama type, unimaginably ruthless.

**K**arl Martin Sinijärv sports an amazing goatee. He is a well-known TV personality and chairman of the Estonian Writers' Union. He welcomes us to the union building, a black box from 1962. Jaan Kross lived here for many years, as did Jaan Kaplinski before he moved to Tartu. Now all the writers have been evicted from their homes, the apartments privatized, the union has lost its state grant and collects rent from a restaurant owner and an antiquarian book dealer to survive. Sinijärv hems and haws when asked about the current language law, which strips countless Russian-speakers of rights accorded to citizens of the Republic. Personally, Sinijärv is considering putting his son in a Russian school where, however, most subjects can also be studied in Estonian, the official language. People who are fluent in both Estonian and Russian are in a much better position in the labor market, Sinijärv assures us, so there is little to indicate discrimination against

Russian-speakers. This does not prevent a fundamental incongruence in relations between the population groups: Russian-speakers who do not have a long family history in the country must take a language test to be granted citizenship, while Estonian-speakers can be illiterate.

Small languages are always threatened and Russia has a massive territory – which is one way of looking at it. But the relative loss of a language can also have an impact. German was the lingua franca in the Baltic region for a very long time: Catherine the Great was a German princess and the coats of arms of imperial generals and diplomats were often German. After the First World War, not only Germans but also the German language began to be pushed back in the Baltic States and the language is no longer accepted currency in the crowded streets of the capital cities, nor to any appreciable extent in the academic seminar rooms. Purity was an ideal not only among the master races, but also among the subdued, the unheard.

Some districts held out longer and in return the memories of centuries-old settlements were all the more effectively obliterated, as Max Egremont has most recently reminded us through his elegiac tour of the historical province of East Prussia.<sup>6</sup>

**T**here is an unobstructed view over the University Quay from the Bronze Horseman in St. Petersburg. So admirable to separate wisdom from frivolity, one might think.

Through the leaves, I glimpse a wedding party, a monkey dressed in a camouflage uniform, a drunk humming to himself, although the red-nosed and shabby are otherwise not a prominent feature of the street scene. St. Isaac's Cathedral is closed on Wednesdays, except for the galleries. It is all very capitalist with money saved by cutting back personnel and the maintenance budget; the faithful must pray somewhere else in the middle of the week. Rush-hour traffic



From the  
Russian  
Museum,  
St. Petersburg.



outside is surprisingly thin. You cannot call this city cramped and crowded.

Having formerly enjoyed its own building on the fashionable Nevsky Prospekt – which burned down a few years ago, fittingly enough, such official behavior seems to be system-neutral – the Writers' Union is now relegated to a backyard on the outskirts of downtown, next door to a factory that once upon a time designed nuclear submarines. Back then there was a luxurious restaurant at street level; these days, boiled sausage, cheese, and Russian cognac are offered in an office setting. I am sure as many speeches are held as they were back in the day, but no one smokes anymore. The writers hand over their works, issued in poor, unlovely bindings. A book about diabetes has been published in 42 editions, sold a half million copies, but the author preferred to publish not under his Jewish surname, he chose a Russian-sounding pseudonym instead. A poet recites. The female interpreter speaks flawless Oxford English. She has written a family saga about an unlikely princely house. The whispers are that she is related to the Romanovs.<sup>7</sup> True or not, she wears a signet ring, at any rate. *L'ancien régime* sticks up its head in a sometimes hilarious, sometimes harrowing way. The Russian Museum is once again named after Grand Duke Mikhail, a brother of Alexander I, and in the stairwell, Lenin has been replaced by Alexander III, a switch of doubtful quality. A glass of chardonnay of the worst kind costs 30 euros in the lobby bar of the Grand Hotel Europe, a sum that will make even the most hardened tourist's jaw drop. He can no longer entertain the belief that the New Russia is a consumer's paradise, after having been a purgatory of shortage.

We cruise the waters plied by Vikings and crusaders. My reporter's notepad is an Apple, my drawing pencil my companion. Dauntless, the museum guide Dr. Olesya Turkina jumps from icon writers to supremacists, from Andrei Rublev's magnificent men of God to Kazimir Malevich's mathematical visions. Vasily Surikov's vision of how Ermac and his men slaughtered Siberian tribes shows the brisk awakening of an empire, Ilya Repin's oil *Ceremonial Meeting of the State Council* (1903), the entire ruling class assembled in one place and intended to adorn the Mariinsky Palace,<sup>8</sup> is a sunset picture. The gallery of social realism has been purged of all hagiography – full of emptiness, surrounded by icy rage.

**F** inland is the land of the *muikku*. The *muikko*, the vendace – the little freshwater fish that is part of *kalakukko*, a traditional dish of fish baked inside a loaf of bread, far from universally beloved among Finns. This begs the question of national characters, of the soul of a people, of collective identities. The question that Herder wrestled with and which was taken over by Hamann. Isaiah Berlin, who wrote his last book about Hamann and was born in Riga, stripped them of their national disguises.<sup>9</sup> Not men of the Enlightenment, perhaps, but inquiring minds, later distorted by Romanticism. Not a rectifier among them. No people, no artifact was ranked higher than others. This is still a legacy to discover for those who want to build new communities.

Obviously, a Russian on a crossing like this one ends up the underdog. Boards the boat last and is the last to get off. Citizens of other nations more easily



In good company at Kosmos, artist restaurant, Helsinki.

navigate the Gulf of Finland. And why is that? Is he less well-behaved? Does he still reek of garlic? Is he, after all, just a rustic black-bread eater beneath a glittering, impenetrable façade? In *The Adolescent*, Dostoyevsky opined that the Russian was condemned to crawl in the gutter, absent the restraining hand of the state. No reasonable individual believes this notion to be anything other than a compensatory metaphor for the writer's own rootlessness and alienation. The Finns have long since shelved their Russian aversion. In Helsinki and other cities, Russian is becoming a third native language alongside Finnish and Swedish, the official ones. The point is continuities. Once upon a time, a Swedish city lay on the fens of St. Petersburg. In Turku in the late summer of 2012, a monument was raised to the two Nordic princes, Alexander I and Karl Johan, Napoleon's field marshal and newly elected heir to the Swedish throne, who met in the city two hundred years ago and agreed that the Baltic Sea would be a sea of peace.<sup>10</sup> Things did not work out entirely as planned. The Crimean War intervened, the British Navy trespassed upon these waters and there are signs to indicate that it has been there much later.<sup>11</sup>

The balance of terror made us forget much of the pain. Now that it is gone – the balance, that is, not the terror, not the state terror – the pain nevertheless lingers. Like the aches and pains of old age, perhaps. ✖

Anders Björnsson is editor of *Baltic Worlds*.

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- 9 *The Magus of the North: J. G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism*, New York 1994.
- 10 Nils Erik Villstrand, *Furstar och folk i Åbo 1812* [Princes and people in Turku, 1812], Helsinki & Stockholm 2012. The agreement went down in history as the "Policy of 1812". It was recently condemned and replaced with what has on solid grounds been called the "Policy of 1628", a pre-Westphalian offensive doctrine. See Karlis Neretnieks and Shou Xiaosong, "Swedish Art of War and Sun Tzu's", in *Kungl. Krigsvetenskapsakademiens Handlingar och Tidskrift* 2012:1.
- 11 Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, *The British Assault on Finland: A Forgotten Naval War*, London 1988; Ola Tunander, *The Secret War Against Sweden: US and British Submarine Deception in the 1980s*, Portland, OR 2004.

# A HUNDRED YEARS LATER STREETCARS ARE STILL RATTLING IN BALTIC CITIES

**A young geographer by the name of Sten De Geer mapped the cities around the Baltic Sea in an article published in 1912. As an attempt to capture the urban structure of Baltic region cities, his paper is unique. In this article, we comment on his meticulous descriptions of these cities, with a century-long perspective.**

by **Thomas Lundén** with Péter Balogh, Thomas Borén, Tatiana Chekalina, Michael Gentile, Zhanna Kravchenko, Jonas Lindström, Dominika V. Polanska, Mari Vaattovaara, Christian Wichmann Matthiessen

illustration **Ragni Svensson**





In recent years, Sweden has once again begun to cast its glance towards the countries east and south of the Baltic Sea, if only in the interests of trade and traffic. The cities surrounding the Baltic are again becoming neighbors to Stockholm, increasingly able to command our attention.

This up-to-the-minute summary was written in 1912 by a 26-year-old newly minted doctor of geography, Sten De Geer. De Geer grew up in a Swedish noble family with roots in the Walloon duchy of Brabant. The De Geers had been heavily involved in the mining industry since the 1600s. His father, Gerard De Geer (1848–1943), was one of the most celebrated geologists of his day and undertook, together with his wife Ebba Hult De Geer, epoch-making studies of the ice recession. It is perhaps no coincidence that the geologist's son was named Sten ("stone"), and that his first works and doctoral dissertation dealt with physical geography.

The introduction to De Geer's article "Storstäderna vid Östersjön" [Cities on the shores of the Baltic Sea] addresses general perspectives in urban geography:

**Anthropogeography is the modern name for the branch of geography that studies how man has adapted to conditions on the surface of the Earth. This study leads to applied geography, which is of the greatest common interest to all mankind, as it must often pass the final judgment in matters concerning traffic, trade, and policy – provided, that is, that it works with scientific clarity and methodically.**

He then discusses the problem of describing a city, especially its functional boundaries with the countryside. Using examples from the United States, he shows how the political/administrative division can provide an utterly misleading picture of what is urban and what is rural. In Sweden, urbanization had led to often uncontrolled suburban sprawl outside the formal city limits. Based on an explanatory map of Stockholm from 1910, he shows how uneven the distribution of the city's population was and how it began to concentrate outside the city limits. The new and extremely densely populated workers' streets and industrial city districts can also be seen on the map as a crowded "fly swarm".

**We must recall** the state of society and technology in the early 1900s: powered by steam and electricity, heavy industry had been able to move in towards the large cities. Tramlines and local railways were essential to the relation between home and workplace:

**Cities whose populations have exceeded one hundred thousand are usually regarded as large cities. The figure is often characteristic: the rapid population rise has begun. The area built upon has become so widespread that local transport has acquired a greater significance. The tramlines converge with increasing clarity on a city center.**

In connection herewith, the distribution of work among city districts has become increasingly defined. Commerce is concentrated in a small, central district, where the population is declining.

A ring of the most densely populated city districts arranges itself around the city center. Outside it, the newer districts follow with wide streets, and furthest out the sprawling suburbs, which take on the character of the residential enclaves of the rich only in one particular quarter.

This is an early description of what later came to be called the spatial differentiation of the city. A description follows of the spatial growth of the large city:

**The zonal growth of the large city is an interesting and impressive geographical phenomenon. It shows a tendency to obey its own laws, despite all obstacles.**

**The city always strains towards circularity. The development of a radiating network of tramlines and local express railway lines results in the star shape, with finger-like suburbs extending along the transport routes. Secondary growth centers often arise near the local railway stations. Suburbs will then appear in clusters, or at least in rows.**

[. . .]

**The normal growth of the large city is thus concentric; compact nearest the periphery of the inner city, more sparsely populated and linear or dot-like outside this. The regularity of growth, the very shape of the city, may to a certain degree and at a given point in time be determined by disrupting factors. These are either natural barriers, such as steep plateaus, rivers, marshy ground, and ocean bays, or else the doings of city councils, civilian or military authorities, or large companies.**

Ultimately, however, the expansive force of the city is victorious and new city districts break out in formerly neglected areas, filling out the circular shape of the zones.

In language whose old-fashioned flavor may not be as evident in translation, De Geer puts into words some of the most important factors in urban growth: how physical, transport technical, economic, and political possibilities and constraints steer development towards a spatial structure.

De Geer notes in particular that "the innermost and smallest zone is the nucleus of the large city, from which it has grown out, and its heart, where the main daily traffic flows in and out. In terms of interest and importance, no other city district is comparable to the commercial center".

How should the extent and change of the central business district be measured? De Geer examines various measurements. In 1890, at least 80 percent of all space in Stockholm was used as housing, but the proportion was 67 percent in the "City Between the Bridges" (Gamla Stan/Old Town), which was the central business district of the day, while the proportion of housing in the Klara district, the nascent central business district, had declined to 77 percent. Gas consumption was another measure, where the outcome per inhabitant was even more striking: consumption was high in areas with many retail stores and offices and few residents, and the new central business district near Central Station had taken the lead by 1907. Land prices also provide input, but statistics are more difficult to obtain for Baltic region cities.

**[L]and in the urban centers is extraordinarily precious. It is therefore desirable to save space and make the streets as narrow as possible. Likewise, it is necessary for banks, offices, and many other commercial enterprises to be concentrated so tightly that one can traverse the commercial center in a few minutes during the brief working day.**

This concentration can be achieved in various ways, depending upon historical and physical conditions. Older European cities, in particular those in the Baltic network of the Hansa

League, often have an *Altstadt* (Old Town) surrounded by a city wall, which exacerbates the need for density. If this area is central, the transformation leads to new construction and densification within the existing street network. The American solution, unconstrained by an old street and property network, is to build skyscrapers: "While Europeans have mainly sought to extract the most possible out of both horizontal dimensions in the city center, Americans have to a greater extent resorted to the third, the vertical dimension."

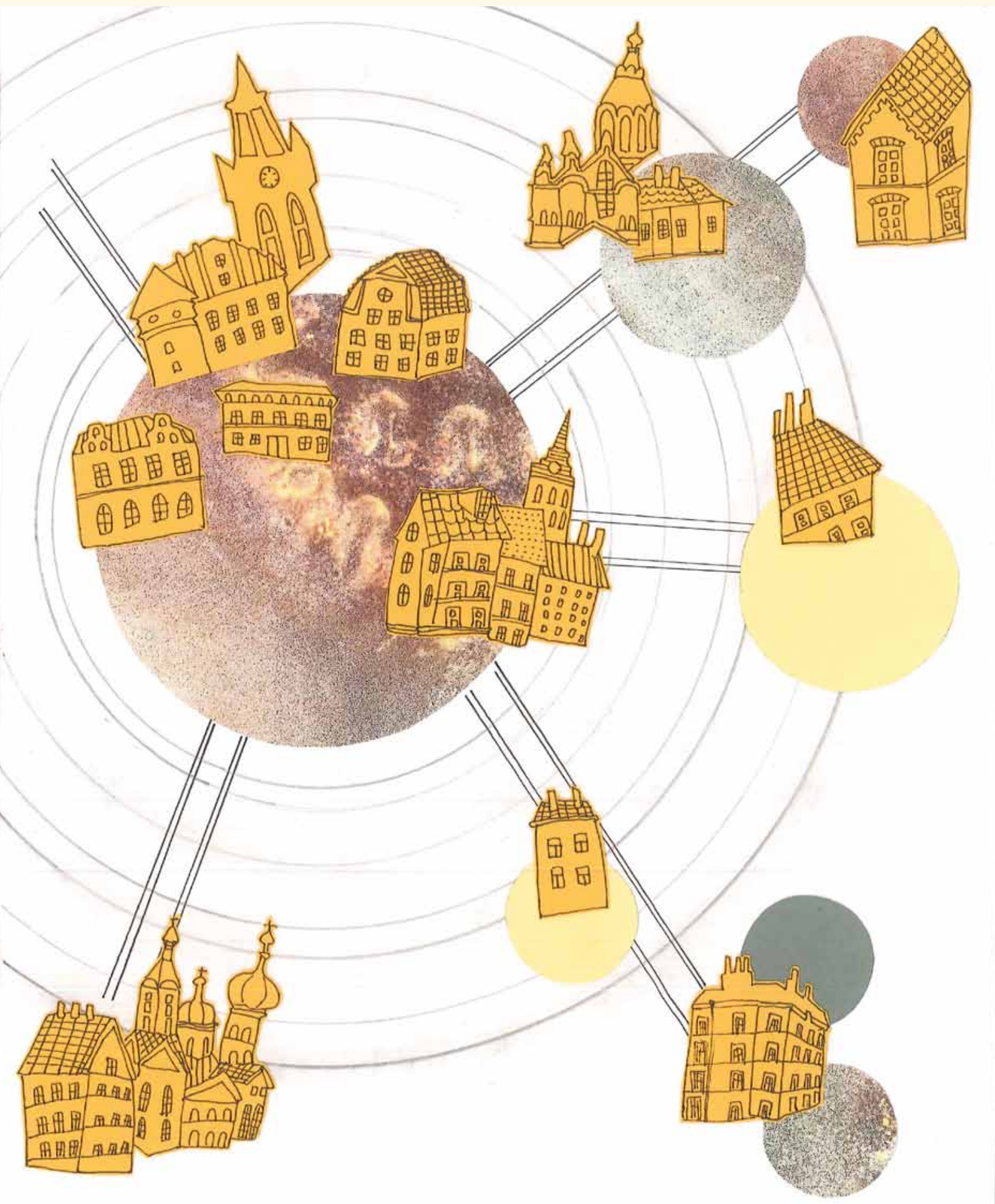
After this discussion, De Geer moves on to discuss how the spatial differentiation of the city should be described in map form. The most important aspects are the boundary between the commercial center and the rest of the city, and the city's functional boundary with the countryside, regardless of the political division. De Geer encounters certain problems in data collection: "Even in our time, there are cities whose governments are so little interested in the city's development tendencies that it is actually difficult to obtain maps showing administrative boundaries with corresponding population figures, which are needed to produce a statistical representation of the outer limits of the city." Making use of available maps, statistics, and personal observation, De Geer was still able to draw the maps that illustrate his texts about the spatial structure of the larger Baltic region cities.

**The maps are clear** and simple. Central business districts are delineated in bright red. The stock exchange and main post office, two key elements in early twentieth-century cities, are marked. Boundaries have been drawn for the city area outside the center based on various urban activities like factories, rail freight yards, and ports. Railway lines and tram lines, like port approaches, are clearly marked, although it was difficult to discern the importance of the individual lines. At this time, the tram lines were probably experiencing the peak of their importance before the more versatile buses began to fill in the gaps.

And so De Geer transitions from the realm of the theoretical to the examination of the urban Baltic region map. Cities with populations of at least 100,000 are very different in "location, size, building style, social status, language, and religion of the population, and in respect of the cities' commercial, industrial, and administrative tasks and overall character". At that time, no cities north of the Stockholm-Helsinki line had attained the lower limit for designation as a large city. Those two cities, however, were surrounded by old trading cities within a distance of 200–300 km: Gävle and Norrköping for Stockholm, and Turku and Vyborg (Finnish: Viipuri) for Helsinki. De Geer discusses the cities' locations in relation to the hinterland. St. Petersburg, with its sparsely populated hinterland and "this population's low position", would probably only be able to count about 300,000 inhabitants, but as the gigantic capital of the Russian realm, it rapidly approaches a population of two million, plus the military suburb of Kronstadt with its more than 60,000 inhabitants. Reval's hinterland is intersected by Riga and St. Petersburg, but may function as an outpost for the capital. Riga, on the other hand, with its large and populous hinterland in the Russian realm, is seen as enjoying the best location of all cities on the Baltic.

The cities of Memel, Königsberg, and Danzig on the borders of the German realm lie in the southeastern gulf of the Baltic, cut off from the Russian-controlled Polish inland. The coastal cities near the southern estuaries of the Baltic enjoy a better position with proximity to Berlin and busy ferry traffic towards Scandinavia. Stettin benefits from an inland location that makes the city a railway hub in all directions. Lübeck is







mentioned as the “historic point of attachment of the Baltic region countries in Europe”, while Kiel benefits from the canal to the North Sea and the presence of the German Navy stationed at the Kiel fjord. Copenhagen is in a better position than Malmö in relation to population and transit traffic, as well as in its role as a capital city.

Despite all the dissimilarities in economic and political status, all of the larger Baltic region cities demonstrate similar demographic trends. Around 1850, a state of near stagnation transitioned into growth, which after 1870 reaches an “almost explosive rate of expansion”, and De Geer predicts that the upturn will continue “over the next few decades”, unaware of the upheavals that would soon change and damage the geopolitical and economic situations of the Baltic Sea countries.

De Geer then provides a description of each of the cities, moving clockwise around the Baltic Sea, starting in Stockholm.

**For Stockholm,** he begins with a few defining topographical elements, an east-west fault scarp and a north-south boulder ridge, which at the time still had a strong impact on the expansion and spatial variation of the city. Three hoists at the fault scarp are even noted on the map. Building good approach roads was a necessity, given that street grades higher than 6 percent were insurmountable for horse-drawn carriages and trams (Lundén 1999:38). The topography of the southern city districts also explains why “since days of old, Stockholm has [...] had an easier time expanding northwards. The focal point of the city is constantly moving in a north-westerly direction”. The northeastern inner city districts “are mainly wealthy residential areas”, bordered by large military grounds and parks. North of these, there is an affluent residential zone, connected to the inner city by an electric express rail line. In the northwest, the city is growing with compact residential blocks, very densely populated. De Geer mentions the “Siberia” district, given its sobriquet as a reference to the miserable housing conditions in Eastern Russia.

“Despite its regular, concentric growth, Stockholm is still split between two lakes, Mälaren and Saltsjön, in two separate halves. The large and salubrious city center in a setting of great natural beauty, however, makes the city an organic whole. One can within this significant central part discern a remarkable division of labor”, with separate centers for banking, newspaper publishing, rail and mail services, shipping, and public administration.

A great deal of attention is devoted to rail, tram, and shipping facilities, along with their impact on the structure of the rest of the city. “Characteristic of Stockholm is the previously

noted circumstance that completely undeveloped and even uncultivated land takes over immediately outside the unusually compact built-up zone of the most densely populated city districts.” The developed agglomeration has an estimated median population density of 21,100 inhabitants per square kilometer.

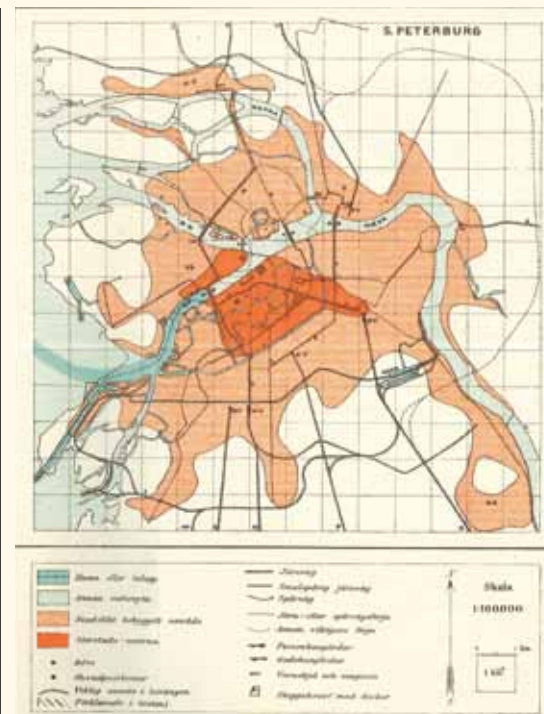
Upon leaving Stockholm, De Geer begins his review of the other Baltic region cities. The descriptions are uneven, partly due to poor statistics and varying availability of maps, but he analyzes all cities with total populations around 100,000 or higher, including Libau (Liepāja), Lübeck, and Kiel, which are not discussed in this article. For the other cities, I have asked urban geographers and sociologists with local expertise to comment on De Geer’s writings and share their views on the most important developments during the intervening 100 years.

Helsinki resembles Stockholm in its situation on an Archaean flatland, but it lies on a peninsula near the coastline. The formal and functional center of the city is on and adjacent to Senate Square. De Geer sees the city’s location on a peninsula as unfortunate in view of rail connections. The city is growing very rapidly, concentrically, and the former equilibrium between Swedish-speakers and Finnish-speakers is changing to the advantage of the latter. Remarkably, De Geer does not mention the drastic change that occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century from idealistic planning to market-adjusted growth, a subject explored in a thesis by Sven-Erik Åström about the Helsinki of the tsarist epoch.

## HELSINKI: MARI VAATTOVAARA

About the maps — it is interesting to see not only how the city has grown to become a pocket-sized metropolis, but also the focal point — the CBD of Helsinki — has moved. Within the very limited possibilities on the peninsula, the former governmental center has gained a business and shopping center that has moved towards the central or even western part of the city center. The administrative center has not changed; the buildings are the same, as are the institutions (government, church, and university). But urban planning has fostered additional centers to the city.

Finland remained a poor country dominated by agriculture and forestry up until the 1950s, as structural change had been hampered, especially by the wars. An economic upswing related to rapid urbanization can be seen from the 1950s onwards. At first, public industrial investments were prominent, but the 1960s saw spectacular structural change in the form of urbanization and suburbanization. Not only Helsinki, but also its urban region, experienced a substantial influx of migrants from the countryside as the fastest urban growth ever was predominantly channeled into suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s. Over two decades, from the 1950s to the 1970s, the share of the regional population found in the neighboring cities of Espoo and Vantaa grew from 8 to 20 percent, from around 40,000 inhabitants to over 170,000. Today, the fastest-growing areas in the region are located in the surrounding municipalities. After the realization of the extensive suburban developments in the 1970s, a new wave of suburbanization came about. Many of the surrounding municipalities have had spectacular growth rates and their aggregate population is now more than 300,000. If they were amalgamated, they would be Finland’s second-largest municipality. In the meantime, Helsinki proper’s share of the regional population has fallen from 73 to 43 per cent. Our city region is growing into a metropolis. Several studies have shown how — in this process — important changes take place in the structural devel-



opment of city regions. From the point of view of structural development, one of the crucial development features then is a shift from a monocentric metropolis towards a network of city centers. As a part of the relatively late but rapid — by international comparison — urbanization process, the Helsinki region has become a city region or metropolitan area that by virtue of its growth has begun to be differentiated in terms of social and spatial structure.

## ST. PETERSBURG: ZHANNA KRAVCHENKO

De Geer focused primarily on population density. His main conclusion about Saint Petersburg was that “the need for concentration of modern city life” had not arrived by that point. Otherwise, he discusses the geographical features — which remain essentially the same. But his argument about concentration no longer applies. The Soviet government considered high population density to be a serious problem and all city planning after World War II was aimed at limiting the inflow of workers and localizing industry and housing outside the city limits.

## ST. PETERSBURG: THOMAS BORÉN

In broad strokes, one could say that over the last 100 years, St. Petersburg has gone from being the center and capital of an empire and arena for one of the watershed events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century — the October Revolution of 1917 — to being an important but peripheral city in a country that has lost at least some of its global claims to power. The city lost its function as capital to Moscow in 1918. During the Soviet era, St. Petersburg’s political influence was far below its ranking in the Russian city hierarchy, despite major industrial production, numerous seats of higher learning, a high level of education among the populace, and several large and important cultural institutions. Nevertheless, the city is still by far the largest around the Baltic, with an official total population of just under four million. When it comes to these population statistics, however, “official” is the operative word: it is likely that many



more people live in the city, considered as an administrative unit or as an urbanized country's main population center. Apart from this, St. Petersburg is one of the largest cities in Europe.

World War II, yet another of the earth-shattering events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had a wide-ranging impact on the city. In terms of urban geography, large areas of low wooden buildings were destroyed, but so were the palaces of the old nobility when the front line was dragged over them – first when the Germans attacked and again when they were pushed back. Today, there are only small areas of wooden buildings left in St. Petersburg, partly due to the devastation of war, partly due to Soviet urban planning policy, especially in Moscow and St. Petersburg, which strongly discouraged housing in private, single-family dwellings. During the post-war era, the priorities of the planned economy were, more than before, aimed at resolving the housing shortage and providing for other basic living conditions. Large housing developments of high-rise apartment buildings now define the peripheral areas of the city. Since the buildings are characteristic of the time they were built, it is easy to distinguish areas developed in the 1950s from those built in the 1960s and 1970s. The same applies to housing developments built during the Stalin epoch before and after World War II. Also, developments of the 1990s and especially the 2000s are characterized by high-rises built very closely together in both old and new housing areas. Private homes and palatial residences for the affluent have been built on the outskirts of St. Petersburg since 1991.

**The subway whose** construction began under Stalin is one of the city's most important modes of transport. It goes under the Neva, which means that it lies deep underground. Commuter trains are routed to various main stations around the city, and there is still no central station. There are tram lines, but they have declined in relative importance and must jostle with buses, trolley buses, and a minibus system on the streets of the city, where the use of private cars has increased markedly in the last twenty years. In short, the congestion on the streets means the subway is often the fastest way to get around town. The bridges over the Neva and its various tributaries in particular are bottlenecks for car traffic and, although more bridges have been built since 1912, they still lack the necessary capacity. In addition, traffic is stopped for a few hours every night to let through the ships moving up or down river and further inland or out into the Gulf of Finland. The open bridges during the white nights of summer are today something of a symbol of the city. Construction of a motorway bypass has begun outside the city center, which may also connect the southwestern and northwestern areas of the city across the Kronstadt district on the island of Kotlin and the embankments built in the innermost part of the Gulf of Finland to prevent flooding in the city. Just south of the city lies Pulkova and the international airport, which must be regarded as small in relation to the size of the city, although the airport has been modernized in recent years.

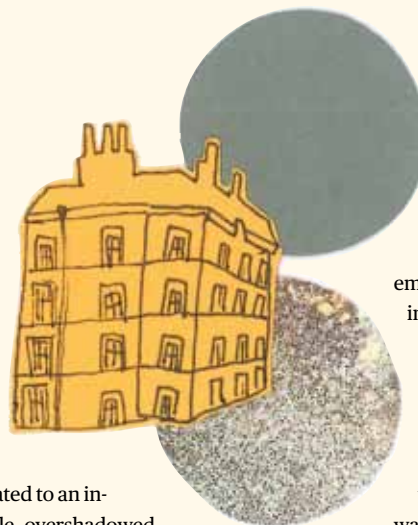
St. Petersburg is still an important port, but it does not have sufficient capacity for current flows of goods. A new port, primarily for passenger traffic, was recently completed on Vasily Island, nearest the sea. This must be considered an investment in international tourism. The city center is on the UNESCO World Heritage list and many of the buildings mentioned in De Geer's article still stand, some with the same names, such as St. Isaac's Cathedral, while the names of others have been changed.

## REVAL/ TALLINN: MICHAEL GENTILE

Sten De Geer portrayed Reval as a relatively small and technically backward city that had been relegated to an increasingly peripheral role, overshadowed by the rapid growth, favorable location, and higher connectivity of Saint Petersburg and Riga. The city was small in terms of population (albeit large in area) and its buildings lacked the characteristic hallmarks of the other Baltic region cities. After a hundred years of experience as a capital city, a half-century under Soviet rule, and twenty years of post-communist revival, the city has undergone massive expansion, even though its relative importance has not appreciably changed.

During the interwar years, Tallinn expanded in all directions in relation to De Geer's Reval; nevertheless, the spread was characterized mainly by small-scale development with large elements of wooden buildings. Of particular note is the rise of the garden suburb of Nõmme southwest of the city, which was built according to the accepted precepts of the time, in keeping with trends around and beyond the Baltic Sea region, especially in Stockholm but also Riga, Danzig, and Stettin. Nõmme is still a prestigious neighborhood in the Tallinn housing market, despite its long period of decline during the Soviet era, when the city underwent major expansion driven by a wave of industrialization. The population increased markedly, pulled by the locomotive of immigration from elsewhere in the Soviet Union. The ethnic dimension of population growth entailed a dramatic change in the makeup of the city; by the end of the Soviet era, the population was composed of roughly equal numbers of Russian-speakers and Estonians.

The population explosion of the postwar era created a crying need for housing space, something which was not prioritized by the Soviet powers, who saw housing as a consumer good unable to contribute to the nation's (future) prosperity. Consequently, Tallinn became an increasingly overcrowded city, even as the overcrowding was exacerbated by the municipalization of the housing stock. As a result, several families sharing one apartment was the norm. The situation gradually improved in connection with the "Khrushchevian Revolution" ("Khrushchevian" is used to designate a certain type of apartment building characterized by low construction quality combined with modern conveniences like private kitchens and bathrooms). A striking transition in thinking about the role of housing in the national economy began in the late 1950s, triggered by the insight that worker productivity was not promoted by the prevailing – and extreme – overcrowding. The Khrushchevian Revolution was made permanent and its building paradigm was replicated for the rest of the Soviet era, with gradually improved housing plans. At the same time, the city was expanding rapidly in various directions. The first branch spread towards the southwest with the construction of the Mustamäe district, which was followed by the Väike-Õismäe district to the west. With its conspicuously circular form, this district came to be distinguished internationally (within the socialist bloc). Last but not least, the Lasnamäe district was built to the east. It was never finished and thus suffered from inadequate infrastructure far into the post-Soviet era; over time, it became home to about one third of the population of Tallinn, the majority of them Russian-



speakers. This was (and still is) the case because access to modern housing often depended upon employers. The industrial companies that participated in the building of Lasnamäe – and many other city districts – imported much of their workforce from Russia. Mustamäe and Väike-Õismäe, on the other hand, have more ethnically diverse populations.

Vanalinn (Old Town Tallinn) lost its commercial functions during the Soviet era and was gradually transformed into a capitalist relic whose main function was housing. The area was not targeted for any appreciable renovation until it was confirmed that Tallinn would host the maritime events of the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980. An attempt at comprehensive renovation was begun, but for the most part efforts were concentrated on the most visible milieus in the city. At the same time, isolated flagship projects were built that would put Tallinn on the global architecture map. The most prominent of these was the city hall (Linna-hall), an all-purpose groundscraper of unbelievable proportions that connected, or rather disconnected, Vanalinn from the sea. With just a little imagination, the outlines of Linnahall might be likened to a Mesopotamian ziggurat.

The city's commercial functions were thinned out; consequently, there was for all intents and purposes no central business district during the Soviet epoch. If one were nevertheless to try to identify a commercial center from that time, it would doubtless be the single large department store *Kaubamaja* (a classic example of a Soviet *univermag*, a communist high-class department store with a limited selection). Spread out behind Kaubamaja were the elite neighborhoods where prestigious homes built during the Stalin era were interspersed with buildings that housed the republic's and the city's political, economic, and judiciary institutions.

The area that circled the inner city during the interwar period gradually turned into a slum as a result of Soviet policy, which was almost never to tear down buildings in order to maximize the net production of housing space. This had two all-pervading consequences. First, these valuable environments are preserved to this day, albeit in poor condition. Second, a socio-ecological landscape was formed of a kind that could be found in the United States, where the less affluent population lived in poorer conditions closer to the inner city, while the more fortunate could enjoy the more modern housing stock found in outlying areas and the most attractive neighborhoods in the inner city (with the difference being that both groups had to settle for a considerably lower standard than their transatlantic counterparts).

**The post-Soviet epoch** entailed a dramatic break with the past. Municipal and state property was privatized or returned to former owners or their descendants. Foreign stakeholders created demand for certain types of urban environments that brought a powerful functional change of the central parts of Tallinn within the space of only a few years. Vanalinn gradually lost its housing function in favor of commercial interests, rooted partly in the strong upturn for tourism (especially short visits from Finland). The port area, closed to the public during the Soviet era, was opened and gradually deindustrialized, beginning with the area next to the passenger terminal where there is great need for border trade retail stores (in particular purveyors of alcoholic beverages to highly taxed Scandinavians).

Other than the port area in particular, most of the changes in the 1990s had to be incorporated within the Soviet-built or pre-Soviet environment. This was due partially to the severe financial crisis that followed the collapse of central planning



and partially to the lack of modern credit institutions. Significant changes occurred at the end of the decade. To begin with, the economy definitively threw off its dependence on Russia in connection with the August Crisis of 1998, which attracted investments from the West. The banking system was modernized and the availability of long-term home mortgages improved for people of average or better income. Within just a few years, the cityscape inside the ring (a street called Liivalaia) was dramatically altered. In developments spearheaded by the controversial Italian property magnate Ernesto Pretoni, the Tallinn skyline, formerly defined by Vanalinn’s thicket of church spires, began more and more to resemble that of Frankfurt.

At the same time, there was highly conspicuous development on the outskirts of the city. With the spread of private car use and access to home mortgages, the 2000s became the decade of suburbanization. New housing developments are sprawling, virtually uncontrolled, in almost every direction, along with a North American lifestyle in which most things revolve around life in suburbia. The retail trade has arrived, with a vengeance, while the geography of the labor market is becoming increasingly “wreath-like”. At first, the new construction consisted only of single-family homes, but these have recently been joined by terraced houses and apartment buildings. The latter are aimed at the group of relatively well-off Estonians who want better quality than they can find in a typical apartment in Lasnamäe but cannot afford a single-family home.

The impact of suburbanization should not be overstated: even though it makes a strong visual impression, it does not involve very many inhabitants. The population of Tallinn, currently about 400,000 people, is despite everything relatively stable.

The city’s market for residential and other types of real property has utterly collapsed since late 2007, especially in suburbia. This is manifest in the huge numbers of unfinished buildings that can be seen everywhere. At the time of this writing, the market has yet to rebound. Recovery will not happen without a change in attitude among foreign banks, especially Swedish banks, which have moved from easily available euro-denominated mortgages to a severely restrictive lending policy.

To sum things up, Tallinn in the 1900s and early 2000s has begun to assume the shape of a North American city with a medieval city center and three large Soviet concrete islands, in what might be a new – and definitely hybridized – contribution to the global urban typology.

RIGA: JONAS LINDSTRÖM

De Geer emphasizes the importance of the Dūna (Daugava) to Riga’s geography and expansion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and notes that Riga seems irregular and rather disjointed. He leads one to believe that this created a certain disconnection between city districts, even though Riga already had eight electrified tram lines by 1910. Why did he perceive Riga’s urban space as “fragmented”?

He ignores the strict zone division in effect in Riga until the removal of the moats and the city wall in the late 1850s. Until then, the areas outside the old city center (the present Old Town) were divided into five distinct zones. The zone nearest the moats and earth embankments could be used only for walking. The second zone was for vegetable farms. Zones three and four also had strict restrictions and were set aside for military purposes,

among other things. Housing construction was not permitted before the fifth, outermost, zone. Thus we are talking about an inner, fortified Riga (controlled by the German-Baltic nobility) and an outer built-up Riga with a vast empty space in between. During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fifth zone was more rural than urban in nature. At that time, the building of stone houses was prohibited outside the moats and earth embankments. The lifting of this restriction in 1857, along with several other restrictive statutes that were thought to be passé and obstructive to Riga’s development, was the starting shot for a thorough and dramatic change of the city’s spatial structure.

De Geer’s fieldwork in Riga coincided with the epoch in which the city was in the midst of what the Latvian architect Andris Roze has called the city’s first widespread metamorphosis. Around 1910, both production and the labor force had doubled in only a decade or so, creating a cosmopolitan environment as well as one of the most vibrant industrial cities in northern Europe. When the First World War broke out, internal combustion engines for battleships, tanks, rail freight and passenger cars were produced in Riga, along with motor vehicles like tractors and automobiles. In addition, Riga was the world’s largest port for timber exports: the Russian realm’s exports via the Port of Riga went mainly to Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, and the United States. One fourth of Russia’s imports came in the same way. But it was the Baltic-German and Jewish businessmen who controlled most of the city’s leading trading companies. Riga also had a British mayor during the years of 1901–1912 in the person of George Armistead, which itself was proof of the city’s cosmopolitan identity.

In the period leading up to the First World War, Riga was an autonomous Baltic-German city situated within the Tsarist Russian Empire. It is interesting that all city districts and street names in De Geer’s text are in German. In the years around 1910, most street signs in Riga were trilingual and it was no coincidence that the German name was at the top of street signs, followed by the Russian and finally the Latvian names. If De Geer’s ambition was to make some kind of contemporary diagnosis of Riga, he should perhaps have mentioned the intensive Russification campaign that started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Tsarist Russian rulers’ primary aim here was to break down the Baltic-German influence in Russia. Beyond switching the official language of public administration and education from German to Russian, attempts were made to induce Russians from other parts of the empire to move to the city. A chauvinist attitude developed and the Russian population was guaranteed privileges: the consequence was a rapid influx of a Russian population to Riga in the bridge period between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Several conflicts were lurking around the corner: between the Baltic-German aristocracy and Russian authority and between the Baltic-German aristocracy and the Latvian population. There was an emphatic increase in the proportion of Latvians in Riga in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which brought unequivocal demands for reformation of local administration, Latvian participation in the affairs of the city, basic education in Latvian, and stronger linguistic rights for Latvian-speakers. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic composition of the city had undergone a striking change, primarily due to the rural denizens of Livonia and Kurland, along with other nearby Russian provinces, who had made their way to Riga in hopes of a better life. What makes Riga particularly interesting is that the city’s development after 1850 can be divided into four distinct periods in which each transition has entailed a rejection of the preceding period, which in turn influenced (and still does to a great extent) the urban space (see Table 1).

Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4
1850—1918	1918—1940	1945—1991	1991—2011
Riga is part of an autonomous Baltic-German noble republic under Tsarist Russian hegemony.	Riga is the capital city of the Republic of Latvia.	Riga is the “capital city” of the Soviet Republic of Latvia.	Riga is once again the capital city of the Republic of Latvia.

Table 1: Four periods of urban development policy in Riga since 1850.

Riga’s past is characterized by irregular balances of power wherein various constellations laid claim to the city in different epochs. During period two, there were distinct efforts to make Riga a Latvian city, partially as an antithesis to the preceding German-Russian-Jewish cosmopolitan epoch. In period three, there were concerted attempts to erase all things Latvian and make Riga a Soviet city. The efforts in period four have been aimed at erasing everything Soviet and creating something new, which may be seen as a hybrid between period one (the cosmopolitan or global, as it is now called) and period two (the first Latvian period of independence).

As a result, every new epoch has led to a revision of the urban space and a new perspective on how the city should be built. In Soviet housing policy of the 1960s, Stalin-era cities were considered overpopulated and thus disproportional. Since 1991, Riga has once again come to be understood as disproportional, albeit from the opposite angle: the city’s structure and scope are considered too comprehensive and overgrown. To put it another way, the urban renewal plans of fifty years ago that were intended to make Soviet cities more proportional have resulted in Riga again being considered far too disproportional, which has led to a new disorder that must be managed. Different epochs are being renegotiated in both a Latvian and global context in post-Soviet Riga. The city has undergone several dramatic changes – or perhaps turnarounds would be more apt – since De Geer was there 100 years ago. There is however one commonality between De Geer’s visit and my own: the city still seems disjointed and irregular.

Exactly as in De Geer’s day, the city is still defined by its duality, with the global (cosmopolitan) and the Latvian (provincial) as thesis and antithesis. This makes Riga a singular and complex case which, with a nod to Marshall Berman, has come to engender a “unity of disunity”. The autonomy that characterized Riga in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries also distinguished the post-Soviet epoch. The difference is that Riga is now Latvian, at least officially – but many Latvians still see Riga as a city for foreigners.

KÖNIGSBERG/KALININGRAD: TATIANA CHEKALINA

It is difficult to find errors in De Geer’s description of Königsberg, since the city changed so tremendously during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during both the subsequent German period and the Soviet and contemporary Russian periods. I would rather focus on the most important changes in the spatial structure of the city.

First of all, in 1910 the city administration decided to eliminate the old fortification walls along with three of the ten city gates. The remaining seven gates were preserved as historical monuments. After reconstruction in 2005, the King’s Gate be-





came one of the main historic attractions in Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg). While De Geer compares Königsberg and Stockholm in terms of spatial structure, contemporary Kaliningrad has very little in common with the capital of Sweden. The historic city center was destroyed by the British RAF in 1944 and the Soviet Army in 1945. As a result, the only building left on the previously densely built island of Kneiphof is the cathedral, which was recently partly restored. Demolition of buildings of the German epoch continued in the Soviet period when, most notably, the castle was destroyed. These days, however, there is widespread opinion in favor of at least partial reconstruction of the castle. Nevertheless, the city thus far lacks a traditional city center, that function being fulfilled by the major avenue of Leninsky Prospect. The street begins at Victory Square (*Ploschad Pobedy*) in the northern part of the city and continues through the southern part of the city down to the main railway station (*Juzhny Vokzal*).

Revitalization of the city's waterfront areas on the banks of the Pregel River has recently begun. The complex of the World Ocean Museum and the Fishing Village are examples of these developments. The old residential areas of single-family homes mentioned in the article have been largely preserved. In the northern and western parts of the city, these areas have become popular as luxury neighborhoods. Some renovated German buildings in these areas have also been converted to commercial premises for large corporations. While the old industrial areas mentioned by De Geer still fulfill their function (the contemporary Baltiysky District), nowadays most new businesses established in Kaliningrad are located in the southern and southeastern districts near the city bypass. In addition, a number of industrial businesses that make professional equipment and home electronics are located in the central parts of the city in premises built in the Soviet era.

## DANZIG/GDAŃSK: DOMINIKA V. POLANSKA

De Geer's map is highly detailed. I do not think there is anything superfluous in his description; he made use of the information that was available about the city at the time. One can see that the Dolne Miasto fortifications have impeded the city's growth towards the east, and that remains partially true today, as the neighboring district of Olszynka is still in

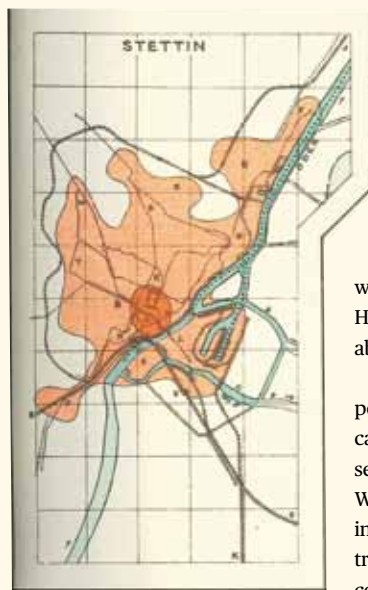
a rural phase. With regard to the two elevations mentioned (Bischofsberg, now Biskupia gorka, and Hagelsberg, now Grodzisko), both have been urbanized as far as possible (primarily green areas, but also residential). The Langfuhr district of the city refers to modern-day Wrzeszcz, which extends alongside the busy Aleja Grunwaldzka road and is now mainly a residential area with some commercial functions (Galeria Baltycka, the largest mall in northern Poland, is there, along with other smaller shopping centers). Wrzeszcz is also the most densely populated city district in Gdańsk. The Ohra district is the one in Orunia to the south, which is now a fairly rundown residential neighborhood. The Schidlitz district is probably what is now called Siedlce and lies alongside the Kartuska road that extends westward from the city center. As De Geer observed, the city and its center were growing towards the west and have done so ever since. Parts of the railway tracks still remain, in addition to the parts that cross the present shipyard and the tracks in Dolne Miasto, which are no longer in use. Urbanization seems to have followed the main thoroughfares, and this is also true today: they are the same. The road network has, however, significantly expanded and branched out. De Geer's red line around the city center aligns with what is now called Glowne Miasto (the central city), but the central area is not as distinct as it was then.

Otherwise, the estuary is still used today, but the shipyard is considerably larger. I discuss the planned development and partial decay of the shipyard in my doctoral thesis. Deindustrialization has left its mark here and new plans call for the area to be converted to a "waterfront development" of offices, homes, shopping centers, and other services. The project is called *Gdańsk Młode Miasto*: The Young City.

## STETTIN/SZCZECIN: PÉTER BALOGH

In his analysis of urban development, De Geer's preoccupation with the topography and the relevance of physical distance is hardly surprising, considering that he wrote before the age of civil aviation. That De Geer sees Germany as the center of Europe may seem geographically determinist at first glance, but gains legitimacy if we remember that this was a time when the balance of power in Europe had begun to shift from Great Britain towards Central Europe. It is against that backdrop that one should consider Stettin's rapid development over four decades.

Stettin experienced explosive population growth from 75,000 inhabitants in 1870 to 235,000 in 1910 – a development that ran in parallel with the demographic trend in Berlin. De Geer writes that "The Oder interest encompasses Silesia and Berlin especially", and Stettin functioned precisely as the port city of the capital until the Second World War. In 1945, the city and its eastern environs were annexed to Poland, which sharply constrained contacts with the west.



Szczecin, however, maintained its role as a hub between north and south: cellulose and coal from Silesia were exported to several countries via Szczecin, and in the other direction, iron ore was imported to Central Europe. Along with the shipyard, Szczecin became the most important port city in Poland after the Gdańsk-Gdynia agglomeration.

The peripheral location, only 12 km from the East German border, combined with West German revisionism led the Polish administration to put off investments in Szczecin until the 1970s. One of the key projects at the time was the building of a bridge straight through the Old Town and eastwards over the Oder, as confirmation of the city's affiliation with the rest of Poland. Whether deliberately or not, this made it impossible to rebuild the old inner city as it looked during the German era. After the system change and recognition of the border with Germany, some attempts at reconstruction have been made with varying results, more successful in some places, less so in others.

The same applied to the resumption of the city's contacts with its western hinterland and Berlin, which these days has better links to the port cities of Rostock and, increasingly, Hamburg. Residents of Szczecin use the Berlin airports frequently, however, and some of them have moved to the increasingly sparsely populated German villages across the border. Today's Szczecin can, however, be characterized as an economically and demographically stagnating city (with a population of about 400,000). After protracted hemorrhages, the shipyard was recently shut down. The port of Szczecin-Świnoujście is well-linked with Copenhagen, Ystad, and Rønne, but traffic volumes cannot be compared to the German ports. De Geer noted that the city "has been made accessible to the large ships plying the Baltic Sea by dredging the Oder, Papenwasser, and Haff, as well as by building the Kaiserfahrt canal through Usedom to the coastal town of Swinemünde" (today's Świnoujście), but such measures are costly and may be unrealistic for modern large ships.

## COPENHAGEN: CHRISTIAN WICHMANN MATTHIESSEN

From the 584,000 inhabitants of De Geer's time to the almost 1.8 million of today, Copenhagen has become a metropolis that also encompasses the old neighboring cities of Helsingør, Hillerød, Frederikssund, Roskilde, Køge, and Dragør, and which has a functional connection with the Swedish neighboring cities of Malmö, Lund, and Helsingborg. Combined with these cities, the area is home to about 2.3 million people.

Copenhagen's structure mirrors the old terminals: the port and the central station. The port is no longer a significant fixed point, even though it still handles cargo and passengers. The city has, however, especially since the Second World War, seen a new terminal develop into a significant infrastructural fixed point: the international airport in Kastrup. Taken as a whole, Copenhagen and Southern Sweden combined make up a vast junction for the Nordic countries:





motorways, railway lines, air traffic, and maritime transport make possible prodigious flows.

The internal structure of the city has developed via the new traffic lines and the major terminals. The “tram city” along with the rail connections with neighboring cities shaped development until the 1930s. The city grew in layers, with the formation of suburbs near stations outside the compact city. A new rail system was introduced in 1934 according to the Berlin model: S-trains. These lines lead from the city center towards the neighboring cities, and the S-train network eventually structured the major growth of suburbia starting in the 1960s: suburbanization, first of housing and later commerce. As of 2012, S-trains and commuter trains reach all of Sjaelland as well as Malmö and Lund. The internal railways have been augmented with metro lines in the inner city since 2000. Motorways have been expanded since the 1950s in a ring road between the neighboring cities and beyond over the Öresund Bridge (in 2000) to Sweden.

The so-called “finger plan” came about in 1949 and has, in various versions, set the direction of development. The palm of the hand – the compact city – extends 10–15 km out from the old city center and holds government, business services, cultural activities, entertainment, retail trade, universities and research, and transport and traffic terminals. Compared to 1912, the city center has grown outwards into adjacent districts, but Copenhagen is still a monocentric city. Outside the palm of the hand, the fingers reach out to nearby neighboring cities within a radius of about 40 km from the city center. There are city center formations that function as parts of Greater Copenhagen and others that are independent. Between the fingers, there are green wedges, divided between agriculture and recreation. Wide swathes of vacation homes are laid out along the northern coast of Sjaelland, which are also part of urban life.

## CONCLUSION

De Geer's article concludes with a few comparisons of the demographic and economic development of the Baltic region cities. Largest in population and even more so in area were the major cities of the Russian Empire, St. Petersburg and Riga, with their sparse but overcrowded wood-built suburbs. Helsinki showed the fastest population growth by far, while the German Baltic region cities (Königsberg, Danzig, Stettin, and Lübeck, though not the maritime city of Kiel) were characterized by stagnation. Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Malmö were the leading merchant ports figured in tonnage, followed by St. Petersburg, Riga, and Stettin; De Geer, however, notes that Lübeck probably had more valuable cargo than the large bulk ports.

How has time treated De Geer's cities? The researchers' comments show how development has impacted the cities to varying degrees. Three of the cities – Stockholm, Helsinki, and Copenhagen – have, despite occupation and bombings of the latter two, maintained and developed their positions with no major upheavals. St. Petersburg was stripped of its capital city function and subjected to devastating civil war and German

occupation, but its imperial luster was recreated as a freezing-in-time of the revolutionary era, although with an expansion of concrete suburbs at the expense of the picturesque but wretched wooden settlements. The same can be said of the Sovietized cities of Tallinn and Riga, whose brief interwar periods as capital cities never left any major impression on the urban landscape. The three South Baltic cities of Königsberg, Danzig, and Stettin underwent a total demographic and national territorial change, paradoxically enough with the retention – or in the case of Gdańsk, restoration – of an exterior form that was nearly obliterated during the Second World War.

De Geer's analysis of the Baltic region cities is limited in part by the inconsistent availability of facts, but also by the undeveloped social science of the time. His emphasis is on the city as an economic phenomenon, which results in a concentration of urban market functions. What is forward-looking in De Geer's work are the attempts to analyze this economic structure and its impact on the situation and topography of the city. He was a contemporary of the social ecology of the Chicago School and often makes comparisons with developments in North American cities. As an attempt to capture the urban structure of the Baltic region cities, his article is unique.

De Geer continued his academic work in urban geography with articles about Swedish and American cities. In one noted article, he described the subject of geography as “the science of the [...] distribution of phenomena on the surface of the earth”. In an attempt to blend scientific and humanist aspects, he characterized the geological Fennoscandia and the anthropogeographical Baltoscandia as “a penetrating distinction between an anthropogeographical and a geognostic province”. Lithuanian geographers and historians have taken up his interest in Baltoscandia in recent years. As a newly appointed professor at Göteborg University in 1928, he sought to open the institution towards the world, with particular focus on the English-speaking countries, but he died in 1933 at the age of just 47. In an American obituary, it was said that his work had “won for him a unique place in the geographic science of the twentieth century”. ❌

Note: All essays are scholarly articles and have been peer-reviewed by specialists under the supervision of Baltic Worlds' editorial advisory board.

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# THE DYNAMIC ANNA BERING

by **Annagreta Dyring** illustration **Karin Sunvisson**

**A collection of letters and customs documents were found in the past year or so which have lain in Russian archives since the Great Northern Expedition through Siberia in 1733–1740. The cache has brought to light a hitherto unknown woman in polar history. Annagreta Dyring sketches the woman's life based on official reports and the recently discovered archival records.**

**T**he horses are ready, the grand carriages fully loaded. Anna Bering wraps her sables more closely about her. The two children are bundled up in the rear of the carriage, only their noses peeping out of the thick woolen blankets. The cold wind defies the brave March sun. “God help us”, she thinks. “Is it really right to set out like this with the children?” Anushka was only three and Anton four. “But”, she continues arguing with herself, “I could not again endure the long months of loneliness without Vitus.”

The woman is married to the Danish naval officer Vitus Bering, the man about to lead a second Russian expedition 8,000 km to the east. This venture, the brainchild of Peter the Great, will become known as the Great Northern Expedition. The year is 1733. An advance guard has been sent out in February under the stewardship of Martin Spangberg, another Dane. The men are shipbuilders, smiths, farriers, and banished prisoners who are to lay roads and build shelters and boats. Now, a month later, the leaders of the expedition are making ready for departure, in the company of naval officers, soldiers, and long columns of servants. They will be mapping the land and the coasts, especially the Northeast Passage. The expedition will culminate in a voyage from Kamchatka to America, where Russia anticipates opportunities for trade and territorial acquisition.

Six months later, the scientific arm of the expedi-

tion begins with 600 men: an assembly of mainly foreign scientists who, assisted by artists, interpreters, and instrument makers, will study the natural environment, the bedrock, the people, the language, and the fauna as they make their way east. Many of the men on the expedition have their wives and children with them – just like men in the great wars. The women are valuable resources, but unseen in the official reports.

Anna Bering comes from a wealthy family in Vyborg. Her father, Matthias Pülse, is a German businessman and her mother, Margareta Hedvig, born in Lund, is presumed to be of Swedish extraction. Anna knows roughly what lies ahead. Five years before, she had traveled deep into Siberia to meet Vitus on his way home from the first expedition to the east. That time, she left her two little boys at home in Vyborg with their grandparents. Now the boys are nine and ten and have been sent to boarding school in Reval (Tallinn), where they will study German and Latin, and live with Professor A. F. Sigismundi.

The Berings move in fashionable society. Vitus has contacts within the highest levels of the Russian Navy and largely due to Anna's charm they have made friends in government circles and the diplomatic corps. One of their closest friends is German-born H. J. F. Ostermann, who had been vice-chancellor of Russia in 1723–1725 and is for all practical purposes the leader of Russia while the expedition is away.



Now Anna sits and worries about whether she has told the servants to pack the right things. Has she brought enough linen? Are the candelabra and table silver safely stowed? And her beloved clavichord, how will it survive the jostling and the cold? The long journey ahead suddenly feels hard to grasp. She dozes a while, the jogging of the horses increasingly somnolent.

**IT TAKES MORE** than a year for the expedition to reach Yakutsk. The winter has been fierce. Week after week, month after month, they live out of portmanteaux, stopping intermittently – only to journey on, often by boat for long stretches along the rivers. The children play as if the traveling life is all they have ever known. The city of Yakutsk has recently celebrated its centennial. Anna quickly settles into the beautiful wooden house the Bering family have been allotted. Maids are hired; the work involved in the couple's elegant social life is too much for Ivan and Jagan, the servants who accompanied them, to manage alone. The tailor stitches away every waking hour; the children are learning to read.

A steady stream of German scientists arrive. Johann Georg Gmelin is a young botanist of 26. According to Linnaeus, Gmelin will collect “more plants than all other botanists combined” and publish a vast *Flora Sibirica*. Another is 30-year-old Gerhard Friedrich Müller, whose job is to describe the history of Siberia, its people and language. Müller becomes the first ethnographer in history. The Frenchman Louis de l'Isle de la Croyère, age 50, devotes the bulk of his time to plotting longitude and latitude, with varying success. His section of the caravan is the longest, with measuring instruments alone filling ten carts.

**THE YEARS IN YAKUTSK** become the best of the expedition for Anna Bering. She holds parties and musical entertainments. Some of the officers play oboe, violin, and balalaika, Gmelin has a fine singing voice, and Anna herself improvises on the clavichord. The repertoire is mainly folk songs, but she also plays a couple of chorales by the Dutch composer Smeelinck. Food and drink are lavish and there is no shortage of vodka. Anna eventually begins producing her own cognac and trading it for furs. She acquires a huge collection of furs – sable, fox, ermine, and marten – and buys entire rolls of Chinese silk as opportunity arises. Gimlet-eyed members of the expedition take note of the couple's incessant sleigh-ride parties and question Captain Bering's priorities. The atmosphere of the expedition gets fraught. Gmelin and Müller refuse to take orders from Bering, who they feel should not interfere in their scientific work. They also feel slighted in matters of housing and service. Finally, an open crisis breaks out when Gmelin and Müller refuse to accompany the expedition to Ochotsk. Instead, they make sure the industrious theologian and natural scientist Georg Wilhelm Steller and his entourage are ordered to go in their place. Still, life in Yakutsk is on the whole good for Vitus Bering and his Anna, at least with regard to their private life. The actual mission is the troublesome thing, so beset by internal conflicts, and the expedition to the North Coast encounters disastrous setbacks.

Vitus is ordered to Ochotsk in 1737 to prepare for the voyage to America, while Anna and the children

are meant to turn homewards. But when he arrives in Ochotsk, nothing has been done and utter chaos prevails. Vitus must arrange everything from the ground up, including building a house and getting the shipbuilding under way. In the midst of it all, he falls ill. Rumor of his illness reaches Anna in 1738 and she does not hesitate. She travels to Ochotsk through the feared Amur Valley, one of the harshest, most inhospitable mountainous areas on earth. The horses starve, sustain injuries, and bolt. As if by a miracle, Anna and the children finally reach Ochotsk.

Dreary and deserted Ochotsk also tries Anna's patience. And it seems letters have come from home with not always welcome news, including that their 19-year-old son Jonas seems not to be destined for a brilliant future: he has joined the infantry. It had taken ten months for the mail to arrive. In February 1740, Anna and the family write the replies that, instead of reaching their destinations, end up in the archives.

The letters are mostly about the prospects of the children at home. “If only Jonas had at least chosen the cavalry”, write both Vitus and Anna in distress to the two men with the power to shape their sons' futures: Professor Sigismundi and the Austrian diplomat Nikolai Sebastian von Hohenholz. Their son *must* go into the civil service, they say in a mixture of supplication and insistence.

**ANNA SENDS MATERNAL** admonitions to 17-year-old Thomas: “You must practice assiduously on your *viola da gamba* so that you can play a masterpiece for me when I come back.” And then she instructs him: “Fear God, be peaceable, adaptable, soft-spoken, pure, and clean; waste not, seek out company better than yourself; disdain not your inferiors by reason of their station; be kind and humble towards all men; avoid bad company. You may then be assured that Our Father the Almighty God will bless you and keep you.” In a postscript, Anna writes that she has not forgotten her promise to bring furs to Professor Sigismundi and his wife.

Vitus writes to von Hohenholz: “As my son sees poorly, could not be expected to make any progress in literature, and is not academically inclined, you have kindly allowed him to join the army. . . .” (The indications are that Bering asked Hohenholz to arrange Jonas's future career.) “But”, continues Bering, “since soldiers in the army must not only be healthy, but also observe decorum and good conduct, which my son by reason of his youth lacks, and since he will now have many opportunities to mix with the ruffians among the musketeers, it would have been better if he had been able to stay in St. Petersburg for a while so that he could have pursued *studii civili* and practiced politeness and decorum.”

Even little Anton, age 10, writes to his older brother Jonas. He is worried about him because he never gets letters from him. The tone is formal and polite: one senses his mother's dictation behind the words.

Vitus Bering will soon set off for Kamchatka and points further east on what is to be his last journey. Anna heads home with Anton and little Anna. She brings valuable cargo along: a great many furs, mainly sables, six leopard skins and about ten fur coats, countless rolls of silks and brocades, about 20 kilograms of silver, porcelain services, Chinese decorative items, her dear clavichord, and much more.

A stay in Tobolsk along the way is a trial for the exhausted Anna. Customs procedures are strict and everything is declared. A zealous customs official records Anna's baggage in minute detail. She must pay a duty of 10 percent of the value of her goods and five soldiers are ordered to accompany the carriage to Moscow to guard the 11 sealed trunks. After more than a month of travel, the retinue reaches Moscow in March 1742. Once there, she goes to stay with her favorite clergyman and, by hook and by crook, is able to circumvent the anticipated goods inspection at the Moscow Customs Office.

**MORE THAN A YEAR** will pass before Anna finds out that Vitus has died. Sven Waxell, the Swede who has been with the expedition the entire time, notifies her of the circumstances. Bering's property in Ochotsk is auctioned off and the money used to pay the crew. A huge collection of Bering's belongings change hands in Ochotsk: countless caftans, a Turkish shotgun, a packet of tea, glass beads, nine books, furs, piles of textiles, and five wigs. A few silver and gold objects, 18 books, and two white wigs are sent to Anna, but Vitus's beloved blue nightcap embroidered in gold, which she had particularly requested to have back, was sold for two rubles to a captain in the Russian Navy.

After she came home, the letters Anna wrote about Bering's estate in Ochotsk revealed her dire financial straits. She now had four children to support on her own and likely a debt to pay for her older sons' living costs. Her care and concern for her sons and their careers likely continued and the results are known. Thomas, in accordance with her wishes, became a civil servant for the “tax agency”. Jonas, receiver of the anxious letters from Ochotsk, stayed in the army, and the youngest son Anton became a cavalryman. Her daughter Anna married a high-ranking military officer.

The passion of Peter the Great for foreign competence was not sustained after his death. The new Russian trends moved instead towards suspicion of foreigners, pointedly so of German immigrants. The Great Northern Expedition, led mainly by German experts, became the stuff of wild fantasy and rumor as the official reports were not forthcoming. Vitus Bering's achievements were not praised to the skies and nor were his friends particularly generous in their posthumous estimations. Nonetheless, the scientific discoveries of the expedition were eventually set in concrete terms, shedding light and appreciation upon past events – but no mention was made of women and children on the expedition. It is only through contemporary scholars' in-depth explorations of Russian archives that we have opened the doors to the Bering family history. For the first time, we can see the contours of Anna Bering, wife and mother, whose fate deserves our belated admiration and respect. ✖

The author is a science writer and holds an honorary doctorate from Stockholm University.

# HISTORY ON TRIAL IN VILNIUS

by **Arne Bengtsson**

Is freedom of speech threatened in Lithuania as it is in Russia?

The politically correct answer in Vilnius is, “Of course not!”

But not everyone in Vilnius is politically correct. The well-known Lithuanian journalist and commentator Artūras Račas has likened verdicts against Pussy Riot in Russia to verdicts against Algirdas Paleckis in Lithuania: both involve criminal sentences for insults.

Earlier this year in Vilnius, the Socialist People's Front leader Algirdas Paleckis was fined 10,400 litas (about 3,000 euros) for denying and grossly downplaying Soviet aggression against Lithuania the night of January 13, 1991.

This is about modern Lithuania's most cherished historical narrative. The whole of Europe has seen the photo of the young woman throwing herself in front of the iron caterpillar treads of Soviet armor. Fourteen unarmed civilians were killed and hundreds were injured when they bravely stood up against Soviet army forces and special units that tried to take control of Lithuanian radio and television in Vilnius on that legendary night.

THAT ALL FOURTEEN were killed by Soviet troops was self-evident, until Algirdas Paleckis shocked the nation. While the evidence is obvious in some cases, like that of the young woman in front of the military vehicle, it is lacking in others, according to Paleckis. As a former MP and former journalist, he has made his own investigation and claims to have found indications that secret snipers were present on rooftops and fired into the civilian crowd on the January night in 1991. Paleckis refers to witnesses, and he quotes ballistics expertise saying that the lethal bullets could not have been fired by Soviet troops on the ground.

So Paleckis claims that, in January 1991, Lithuanians shot at Lithuanians.

In Russia, Pussy Riot cursed in the church. In Lithuania, Algirdas Paleckis's words are sacrilege against the nation's holy of holies. To make things worse, Paleckis was already a hated man. His name in itself is enough to provoke antipathy, to put it mildly. Algirdas's grandfather Justas Paleckis was the Lithuanian Quisling, heading a puppet government in 1940, when the Soviet Union took control of Lithuania. The one and a half months that Justas Paleckis served as Prime Minister was enough to besmirch the family name for generations to come.

The son of the late Justas Paleckis is today an MEP



Exhibition commemorating those who died at the Vilnius TV Tower on January 13, 1991, in the Lithuanian independence movement against Soviet rule.

in Brussels for the Lithuanian Social Democrats, a fairly respectable role, while the grandson, Algirdas, has fallen under the nation's wrath.

Algirdas Paleckis claims that Lithuania's ruling party Homeland Union instigated the trial against him by writing to the state prosecutor. Paleckis was first acquitted in a lower court, which ruled that he had quoted sources rather than stating a personal opinion. State prosecutors appealed, and the Vilnius district court convicted Paleckis in June of this year.

Paleckis was prosecuted under a 2010 amendment made to Article 95 of the Lithuanian criminal code, which bans the denial of crimes committed by the Soviet or Nazi regimes in Lithuania. The law also states that whosoever “grossly underestimates” aggression or crimes carried out by the USSR or Nazi Germany against Lithuania “in a threatening, hostile or insulting manner” shall be punishable by up to two years in prison.

THIS LAW IS in fundamental conflict with international treaties protecting freedom of speech, claims Paleckis. Even people opposing Paleckis's political views and describing his version of the events in 1991 as “nonsense” support his right to state a diverging opinion on the historical narrative.

But Justas Paleckis is at odds with much of the common historical wisdom in Lithuania. His reputation has not been strengthened by his criticism of the downgrading of Holocaust memory in Lithuania. Paleckis spoke out against official laxity towards the right-wing extremist marches during the Lithuanian national holiday, March 11, when neo-Nazis were

heard chanting “Juden raus”. He has also, together with others, condemned the ceremonial reburial in June this year of Juozas Ambrazevičius-Brazaitis, head of the Provisional Government of Lithuania in 1941, proclaimed by some a national hero, and known by others for his links to the Nazi-led extermination of Jews in Lithuania.

The government of Lithuania supports the effort by MEP Vytautas Landsbergis and other Baltic and Central European MEPs to establish a “reunification of European history”. In the Prague Declaration of 2008, they stress “substantial similarities between Nazism and Communism in terms of their horrific and appalling character and their crimes against humanity”.

This double genocide approach is seen by Jewish representatives as a denial of the uniqueness of Holocaust and downgrading the role played in it by Lithuanians and other Balts. Some Lithuanian Social Democratic politicians, including Algirdas Paleckis's father, have signed a counter-declaration, the Seventy Years Declaration, which rejects “attempts to obfuscate the Holocaust by diminishing its uniqueness and deeming it to be equal, similar or equivalent to Communism”.

THE LITHUANIAN Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis accused those Social Democrats of being pathetic and echoing Kremlin ideologues. But when Ažubalis claimed that the only difference between Hitler and Stalin was the size of their moustaches, one Social Democratic MP reminded the Foreign Minister that people used to come back from deportation, but usually not from the gas chambers.

Later the Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius said there had been “misunderstandings” over his minister's words, and in an interview with the *New York Times* Kubilius declared that “Holocaust crimes are unique”.

What the historian Timothy Snyder named *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* has become an ongoing political and cultural war in the Baltic and Central European countries of the EU. Who suffered the most? Who was the worst perpetrator?

It has turned out to be a fatal battle, where free speech seems to be on the retreat in the face of strong nationalistic forces. ❌

Arne Bengtsson is a correspondent for the Swedish News Agency TT and the author of books on present-day Baltic societies.



# REMEMBERING THE SHIPYARD STRIKE

by **Karin S. Lindelöf** illustration **Moa Thelander**

The 1980 strike at what was then the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk is often described as a milestone in recent European history, especially that of Central and Eastern Europe. The documentary film *Children of Solidarność* depicts the strike as the starting shot for the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe. The same historiography is found in the permanent exhibition *Roads to Freedom*, next to the Solidarity headquarters in Gdańsk, near the shipyard and Solidarity Square, where the monument to the workers killed in the 1970 uprisings stands. In photographic displays, commemorative albums, tourist brochures, and other depictions of the events in 1980, texts recur again and again about how the strikers in Gdańsk and the activists of Solidarity proved that non-violence and civil disobedience were successful strategies in the struggle for a life of greater human dignity – for themselves and the generations to come.

The strikers knew the struggle for democracy would take time, but hoped that their children would someday be able to grow up in a free country. A song written during the strike became the movement's unofficial anthem. It was called "A Song for My Daughter".

I have no time for you;  
your mother hasn't seen you for so long.  
Wait a little longer, until you're grown,  
and I'll tell it all to you.

The story of these hopeful days,  
filled with talk and heated argument.  
Of all the long and sleepless nights,  
of our hearts beating like mad.

Of all the people who've come to feel,  
at last we've found our way home,  
Together we are fighting for our today,  
but most of all for your tomorrow.<sup>1</sup>

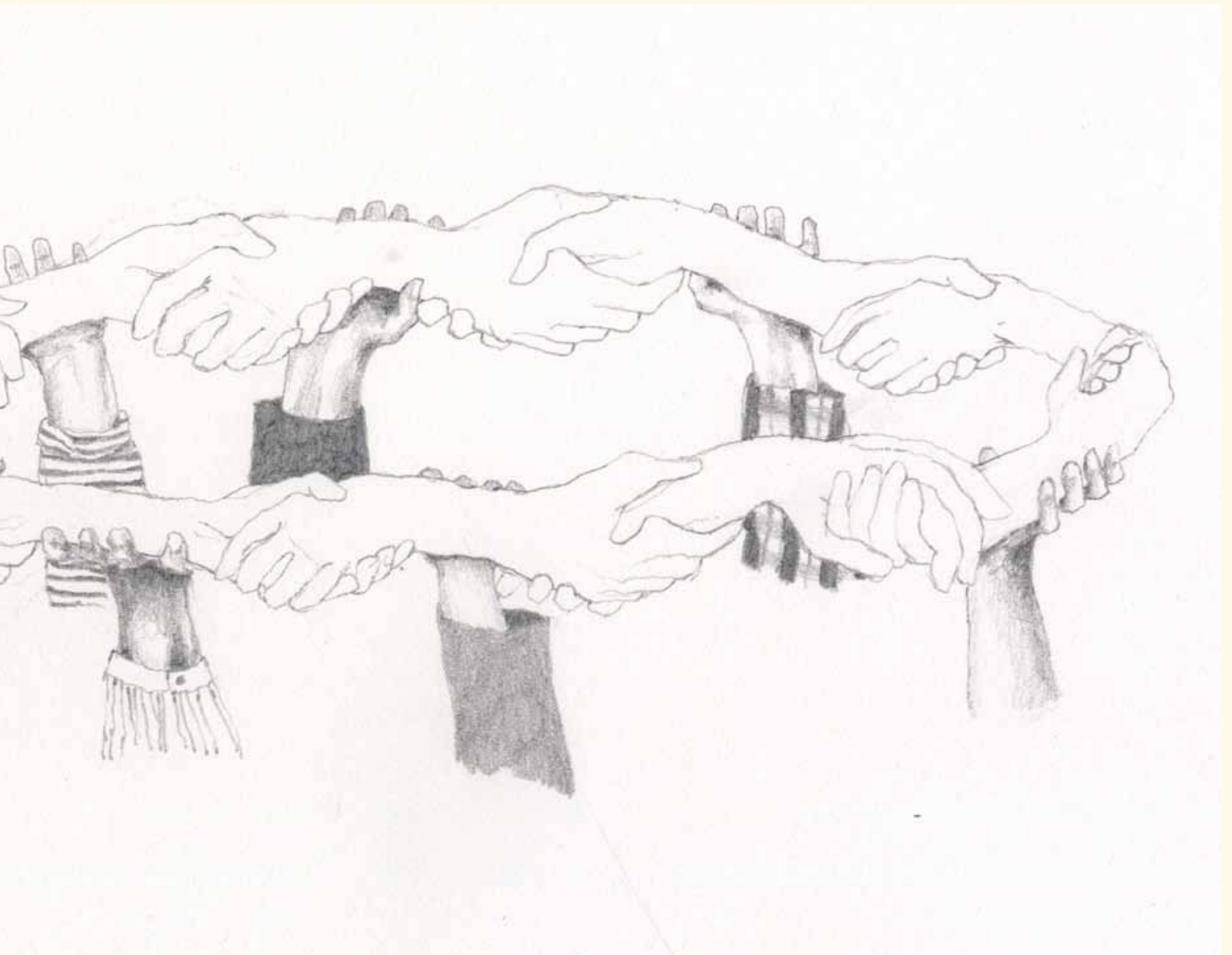
In this article, my aim is to study how the Gdańsk shipyard strike and the formation of Solidarity have been remembered and observed afterwards, especially in connection with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in August 2010. In so doing, I want to explore how people create meaning in past events in relation to current interests, and how the depiction of a shared history is constantly recast and used.

The empirical material consists of printed and published

materials – including brochures, web pages, writings, and commemorative albums – as well as field observations and visits to various exhibitions in Gdańsk in connection with the anniversary celebrations. The material also includes printed matter and observations from earlier visits to the permanent exhibition *Roads to Freedom* in 2001 and 2005.<sup>2</sup> Since the central themes in the material are generation, history, and the future, I focus on the passing on from one generation to another of the cultural legacy constituted by the strike and the Solidarity struggle. Beyond this, I will discuss the *moral legacy* of the activists of the 1980s and the *exhortation to solidarity* with the rest of the world in which this legacy is materialized in the 2000s.

The theoretical premises of the study are deconstructivist and power-critical, based on the school of discourse theory developed by the political philosophers Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. A fundamental idea in this theory is that life is informed by a constant struggle for interpretive precedence about which understanding of the world should be considered the "right" one, and that these interpretations are always temporary fixations of meanings that might have been





utterly different.<sup>3</sup> In this article, this overarching framework will be combined with tools of theory-in-use, primarily derived from ritual theory.

## PREDECESSORS AND HEIRS

Among the books for sale in the lobby to the *Roads to Freedom* exhibition is *Freedom: A Do-It-Yourself Manual* by Czesław Bielecki, a former Solidarity activist and adviser to Lech Wałęsa during his presidency in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> The book was intended to inspire and guide young people who want to start their own social movements and is available in several translations: I catch a glimpse of at least Polish, Spanish, and English behind the counter.<sup>5</sup> There is a cover blurb, signed by Lech Wałęsa, which reads as follows:

I was fortunate to lead a unique revolution. In 1980–1989 we won our struggle for freedom bloodlessly. It was as recently as 1956 in Budapest and 1970 in the Polish cities on the Baltic Coast that blood had flowed. We began to disassemble communism with

our victorious strike in August 1980.

“Solidarity” was created. By joining together millions of people in Poland, we showed other nations how they could escape their totalitarian captivity. We kept up our resistance, and the world supported us with solidarity. The Roundtable of 1989, at which the opposition reached a historic compromise with the government, became the beginning of the end of communism and its rules of lies.

I recommend Czesław Bielecki’s book to all those who want to win their own non-violent fights for freedom. Its title conveys its meaning: If you do something for freedom yourself, others will help you.

The book was published by the European Solidarity Center, an organization founded in 2007 after a ceremonious signing of a Letter of Intent on August 31, 2005, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gdańsk Agreement, the social accords between management and the strike committee at the shipyard. Like its predecessor, the Solidarity Center Foundation, which was formed

in 1999 under the chairmanship of Lech Wałęsa and is still in operation, the mission of the European Solidarity Center is to spread knowledge about Solidarity and the modern history of Poland by means of exhibitions, educational projects, anniversary celebrations, conferences, and publications.<sup>6</sup>

The poetic appeal – and the moral challenge – of Wałęsa’s text recurs on the European Solidarity Center website, where the former director, Roman Catholic priest Father Maciej Zięba, describes the organization as follows:

Solidarity means a commitment and a challenge. It is a commitment for the authors and participants of the events of August 1980 in Gdańsk and in Poland; and it is a challenge for the future generations and for those for whom freedom, dignity, and justice remain a dream. Sustaining memory about the moral message of the “Solidarity” movement and the creative delivery of its legacy to our posterity, indicating how current and universal it is – these are the main tasks of the European Solidarity Center.

The Center strives to achieve the first goal – the



retrospective one – with a modern and interactive museum describing how the events initiated by the strike at the Gdańsk Shipyard started a domino effect – liquidating the communist system in the entire Central and Eastern Europe, also affecting other regions of the world. It will be supported by the multimedia archive and library, securing the legacy of “Solidarity”, which nowadays is scattered and sometimes neglected. Through expositions – including mobile exhibitions traveling throughout the world – the European Solidarity Center wants to enhance the memory of history, which seems to be weakening in Europe and which is necessary for building a European identity.

The other – prospective – goal is to transfer the legacy of “Solidarity” to the future, delivering it to the next generations of young people, not only Poles. Showing solidarity, caring for the common good, building a deeper community of ideas while respecting diversity as values that are not anachronistic, which are a creative challenge, worthy of energy and skills. This is why education is very important for the Center. Even now the European Solidarity Center is working on it: organizing workshops for young people from all over Europe and seminars for young Poles, arranging a series of lectures and discussions, and preparing a training offer for teachers and local leaders.

As a cultural institution, the European Solidarity Center creates cultural events and stimulates artistic activities related to subjects concerning very broadly defined solidarity. It organizes concerts and festivals as well. In November 2007 the Center inaugurated a film review entitled “All About Freedom”, which presents various film forms speaking about freedom in the modern world. It has also organized a screenplay contest. The European Solidarity Center is a scientific research institution as well, analyzing the issues of freedom especially the achievements of “Solidarity’s” peaceful fight for justice, democracy, and human rights to share these achievements with those who are still deprived of these values. Moreover, the Center is a forum for public debate not only about history, but also about current objectives. And these objectives include civil society, integrated Europe, and peace.

The European Solidarity Center goes beyond politics and it is not associated with any party. It promotes deeper values, shared by Poles despite their differing political opinions. The intention of the creators of the European Solidarity Center is to make it a center for cooperation and integration. Even now, many organizations and institutions from Poland and abroad approach the Center with various proposals for joint projects. Private persons approach us as well. Every contact is priceless. This is more than just studying the past or presenting it in an attractive way. This is a way to create meta-political connections between people for whom August 1980 is not a closed story. This idea brings a network of interpersonal solidarity to the map of the independent Republic of Poland, of the solidarity which still is the most universal Polish product of the best quality in the world.<sup>7</sup>

This text and the previously quoted cover blurb by Wałęsa summarize, in an almost painfully clear way, the entire com-

plex of meaning activated in conjunction with the anniversary celebration in 2010 and the recollection of the events of August 1980. This embraces both the dedication of those who were actively involved in Solidarity and in the strike in particular, and the challenge faced by today’s (and tomorrow’s) youth in shouldering the moral legacy and passing it on, both inside and outside Poland. The story that the shipyard strike in Gdańsk in 1980 was the first domino to tip in what would be the fall of Eastern European communism<sup>8</sup> – and that another important push was given by the roundtable discussions in Warsaw after Solidarity’s electoral successes in 1989 – is, of course, also there, as is the oft-recurring national self-image of Poland as brave martyr and moral savior.<sup>9</sup> The importance of building a common European identity based on historical memories is also emphasized, along with the importance of solidarity with – and the duty to aid and inspire – people all over the world for whom freedom, human rights, democracy, and justice are not the unquestioned conditions of life today. The multiplicity of activities described among the center’s operations also reflects the multifaceted celebrations that took place in 2010. These included everything from cultural events and educational initiatives to scholarly congresses and public debates: events for children, youth, adults, and senior citizens – including people for whom “August 1980 is not a closed story”.<sup>10</sup>

The passing down of historical knowledge to coming generations is a central aspect of the activities of both the European Solidarity Center and the Solidarity Center Foundation. The websites of both organizations present several educational and exchange projects directed at children and youth in Poland and other countries. In 2010, before and during the 30th anniversary of Solidarity and the shipyard strike, for example, the “My Little Solidarity” and “Gdańsk Station” projects were carried out at the European Solidarity Center. Projects at the Solidarity Center Foundation included “A Test of Solidarity” and “zaPLeCZe (Backstage)”. “My Little Solidarity” was an essay project directed at younger Polish school-children (in Poland and abroad):

**We are looking for written works in which young people describe their perceptions of the historical Solidarity (what they know about it, what they value in it) as well as their perceptions of solidarity today (how they define and understand it).<sup>11</sup>**

“Gdańsk Station” was an exchange project between teenagers and young adults from Western and Eastern Europe (but also attracted participants from countries including Brazil and Japan, according to the website), which was realized in conjunction with the Youth Forum 2010 conference in Poland. Project participants listened to talks about modern European history, visited museums, and participated in workshops where they discussed the current state of the world. The young people were also able to visit significant places in the struggle for freedom, and sites that “symbolize the Polish people’s struggle for freedom”, and, finally, to attend Youth Forum, where “Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Lech Wałęsa” was a special guest.<sup>12</sup> “A Test of Solidarity” was a solidarity and humanitarian aid campaign based on collecting postcards from people all over the world. It was in commemoration of Solidarity, and sought to aid an educational project in Afghanistan:

**“By organizing ‘A Test of solidarity’ action we want to demonstrate that in spite of distances between various countries, despite all the linguistic, cultural, and religious barriers, political affiliations or inter-**

**ests, we can share common intent, and the word ‘solidarity,’ associated for 30 years with Poland, the Gdańsk Shipyard and Lech Wałęsa, apart from a common historic success, has also a universal value”, emphasizes Danuta Kobzdej, Chairwoman of the Solidarity Center Foundation. “‘A Test of solidarity’ action is aimed not only to enhance knowledge about the civic movement, but first of all to promote the value of solidarity in its social dimension.”<sup>13</sup>**

“zaPLeCZe (Backstage)” was a theater project involving teenagers and young adults from Poland and the Czech Republic, where one of the particular concepts explored was “solidarity”, both as a value and in connection with “the history of the civil movement that began in Poland in 1980”.<sup>14</sup> What these projects – and their descriptions – share is the moral link and the passing down of the idea of solidarity between generations, where the strikers in Gdańsk in 1980 and the founders of the Solidarity movement are established as moral predecessors and today’s youth – and coming generations – are written into the story as moral heirs in the struggle for freedom and human dignity.

The Eastern European expert and modern historian Timothy Garton Ash has also, in an eyewitness account of the strike, emphasized how dignity was the strongest, most palpable feeling communicated during the weeks of the strike.<sup>15</sup> Solidarity, morality, and dignity became important discursive elements in the story created around the strike, the Solidarity activists, and the significance of both to the continued geopolitical, economic, and cultural development of Europe.

Through life history interviews with highly educated Poles, the ethnologist Katarzyna Wolanik Boström has shown how personal and family histories are intertwined with important events and phenomena in Polish history. By telling the stories of their lives, they also tell the story of Poland, evoke Polish society as they understood it – and their own place in it, as they would like to be understood. Solidarity, morality, and dignity also have an important place in these stories: no one wants to appear to be part of an oppressive system; everyone wants to understand themselves as a morally comprehensible person.<sup>16</sup> Now, in retrospect, when we know which social system and ideology “won” and which lost – at least from the historical perspective we are capable of surveying today – it becomes important to take a stance on this “truth” (however provisional and potentially open to question it may be). The moral threads become central to the fabric of the projects for children and youth. They are offered a particular, discursively created and politically airtight understanding of historical phenomena – and a great responsibility is laid upon the young generation to be good stewards of their legacy.

## MORALITY AND RITUAL

In connection with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the strike in 2010, a number of happenings, exhibitions, and manifestations also took place that further underlined this moral legacy (such as marathon and roller skating races, musical, theatrical, film, and art events, conferences, book presentations, and other events in honor of Solidarity and the anniversary of the strike, with varying connections in content). These can – like the anniversary celebrations overall – be analyzed as *secular rituals* or *public events*.

The anthropologists Sally Falk Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff coined the term “secular ritual” in the 1970s, meaning a sense of collective ceremonial forms with no religious or magical purposes – ceremonies that mirror, reorganize, and create social arrangements and modes of thought.<sup>17</sup> The an-

thropologist Don Handelman instead uses the term “public events” for public ritual contexts that can either be pompous, clearly defined, and solemn with an unambiguous message – “events-that-present” – or playful, messy, rebellious, carnivalesque, and spontaneous – “events that re-present”.<sup>18</sup> Quite often, the more carnivalesque elements of parades and other events are the province of teenagers and “young adults”.

One of the more playful events during the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in Gdańsk – which drew a great many young people – was “A Day in the Life of the Conspiracy”, a happening held at the “Klub Rock Café” at the Museum of Polish Rock in Gdańsk on August 30, 2010. Videos from the student movement with connections to Solidarity were shown, a troupe sang protest songs typical of the times, and participants could print their own flyers with the text “THE CROW CAN NOT DEFEAT THE EAGLE”,<sup>19</sup> or a copy of the very first bulletin issued by the shipyard strikers in 1980. Outside the club, passersby could paint slogans and political street art from the communist era using stencils and spray paint on a plywood panel. Afterwards, visitors could allow themselves to be arrested by young men in militia gear. One of the costumed militiamen (who approached with a feigned threatening mien when I photographed one of the arrests) told me that he had come to Gdańsk from Warsaw for the sole purpose of taking part in the happening: “I think this is the best way to tell young people about the history”, he said, and pointed at his militia shield and baton. In this case, play was used to pass down the historiography of what happened in Poland in the 1980s and before then to the young generation of today.

The previously mentioned do-it-yourself manual from the European Solidarity Center also ends with an exhortation aligned with this idea of handing over the history:

**It is for them [the new generation] that this book was written. It was written by parents who had been successful at defeating communism, and now they don't want the next thugs who come along, those who resemble Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, Castro, Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Haile Mariam, or Bin Laden, to turn our common house into a madhouse. And then blow us all up.**<sup>20</sup>

The moral legacy to modern youth is emphasized again and again and the authorities are those who personally suffered and fought for a free, more humane society.<sup>21</sup> The many exhibitions and stage productions are effective tools – entertainment and education wrapped up in one – for getting the message across and making it stick in the minds of young people. Other ways of popularizing and passing on the message of the strike and what happened afterwards to a younger generation

included the comic strip published in the Solidarity magazine at the XXX Congress in 2010<sup>22</sup> and the comic book published for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005.<sup>23</sup> In a book about the importance of museums as political arenas, political scientist Timothy W. Luke emphasizes the power that the exhibition medium has over the public, specifically through this intertwining of education and amusement:

**One of the most effective techniques for governing these populations today is entertainment; and [...] some of the most powerful public performances to interest and amuse people are museum exhibitions.**<sup>24</sup>

“History” is a construction, a negotiation, and a struggle about meanings, and the canonized, hegemonic version is always an exercise of power vis-à-vis other ways of depicting the same historical events.<sup>25</sup> Through all of these exhibitions, writings, etc., endeavors are made to create a consensus by which other interpretations of Poland in the 1980s are suppressed and made unwelcome. From the perspective of discourse theory, this hegemonic version is called *objectivity*, a truth composed of discourses laid down and articulated so many times until it seems unquestioned and natural.

## FREEDOM AND EMOTION

In addition to the emphasis on the moral legacy, freedom is a strong theme in most depictions and commemorations of the strike. Visitors given the brochure for the *Roads to Freedom* exhibition in 2010 read the following:

**The “Roads to Freedom” exhibition tells of people who tried to make the dream of independence come true for hundreds of thousands of Poles living in the Polish People's Republic. Those who sacrificed everything for the idea of freedom were many. The exhibition is dedicated to them.**

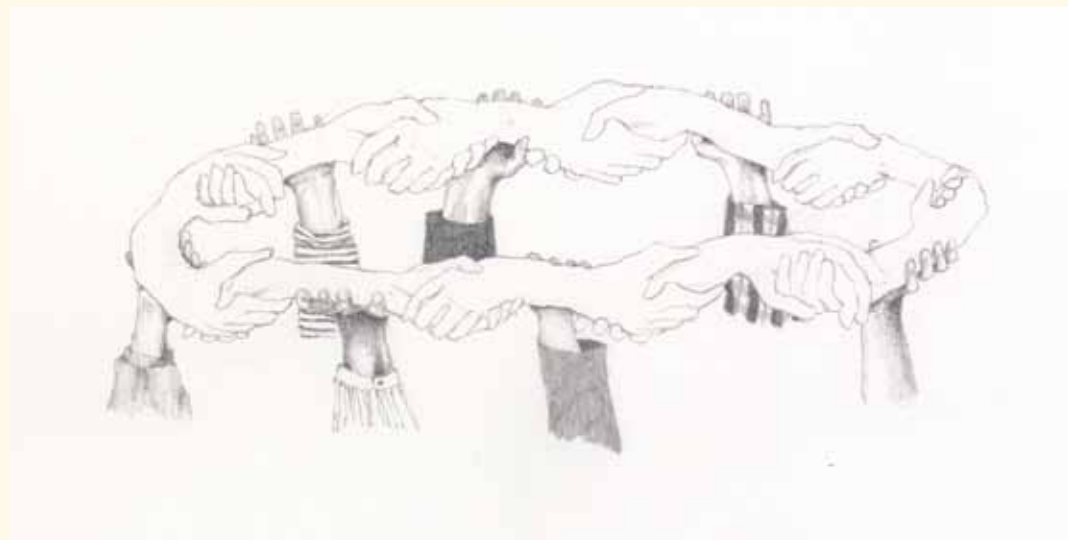
The strike was commemorated at Solidarity Square on August 31, 2010, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the strike agreement, in an emotional and solemn Catholic mass – an obvious example of an event-that-presents in which secular and non-secular rituals were mixed. The participants were made up mainly of senior citizens and union people, probably with personal experience of the Polish people's struggle for freedom, memories of the events in Gdańsk in 1980, and perhaps personal connections to the iconic figures of the strike:

**August 31, 2010, 12.00: Mass at Solidarity Place. “Everybody” from the church is there. Men, men, men ... The Black Madonna from Częstochowa. Women in the choir and the orchestra. A young woman reads (aggressively) in English from the Book of Joshua. The men and women in the audience (most of them seniors) understand nothing ... they look around, impatient. The Smolensk Tragedy is remembered. After a while, Anna Walentynowicz, “legendary mother of Solidarity” is mentioned. (The big screen displays zoom in on the portrait of her and Lech Kaczyński, frames draped with mourning bands.) This unrelenting motherhood ... Flags and banners, a flame burns in the monument to the workers shot in 1970, souvenirs are sold (mostly flags of various sizes), the Doki Pub outside the shipyard gate is doing brisk business, newspapers and flyers are being passed out.**<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note how various events, persons, and symbols are linked in a situation like this.<sup>27</sup> The historiography of the 1980 strike often emphasizes the importance of the Polish cardinal Karol Wojtyła's election as pope in 1978, and that he, as John Paul II, chose his homeland for his first official pilgrimage in 1979. According to this version of history, he infused hope and courage into his countrymen with his homilies and addresses in Poland – and the very next year the revolt was a fact.<sup>28</sup> The church was also a palpable presence during the strike – in the form of priests who celebrated mass inside the shipyard grounds – for the strikers and for the crowds outside. During the communist era, the church and religion in Poland stood for opposition to the state and for freedom, in contrast to communist ideology and the control machine of the regime. So, there is nothing odd about the close ties between the Polish Catholic church and the Polish-born pope and the events at the shipyard in August 1980 and developments over the next decade.<sup>29</sup> These bonds were strengthened by the death of John Paul II in April 2005, in the midst of Poland's preparations for the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Five years later, in April 2010, another event with strong symbolic overtones occurred: the tragic plane crash in Smolensk, in which several former Solidarity activists died, including President Kaczyński and Anna Walentynowicz. It is thus no surprise that this event, along with memorials of the lethal shootings in the 1970 protests, were given a prominent place among the more solemn elements of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

Motherhood is also an important symbol, both for Poland as a nation and for the Polish Catholic church (in the person of the Madonna). The family ideology of the communist era, centuries of Polish nationalism, and conservative currents in 21<sup>st</sup> century Poland: the mother symbol can be related to all of these.<sup>30</sup> That Anna Walentynowicz is tied to Solidarity as a mother figure is thus to be expected. From a feminist perspective, however, this is problematic, as it implies a risk that Walentynowicz will not be fully recognized as a political activist and revolutionary as her male comrades have been, but rather portrayed and remembered based on the archetypal position of woman as mother – albeit on a symbolic level – which makes an understanding of her in a significant political context essentially impossible. We are quite simply incapable – within the framework of the discourses that currently dominate our society – of linking the “mother” with positions of “dissident”, “revolutionary”, and “union and political activist”.

Several memorial concerts were also held during the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, at which the words *freedom and*





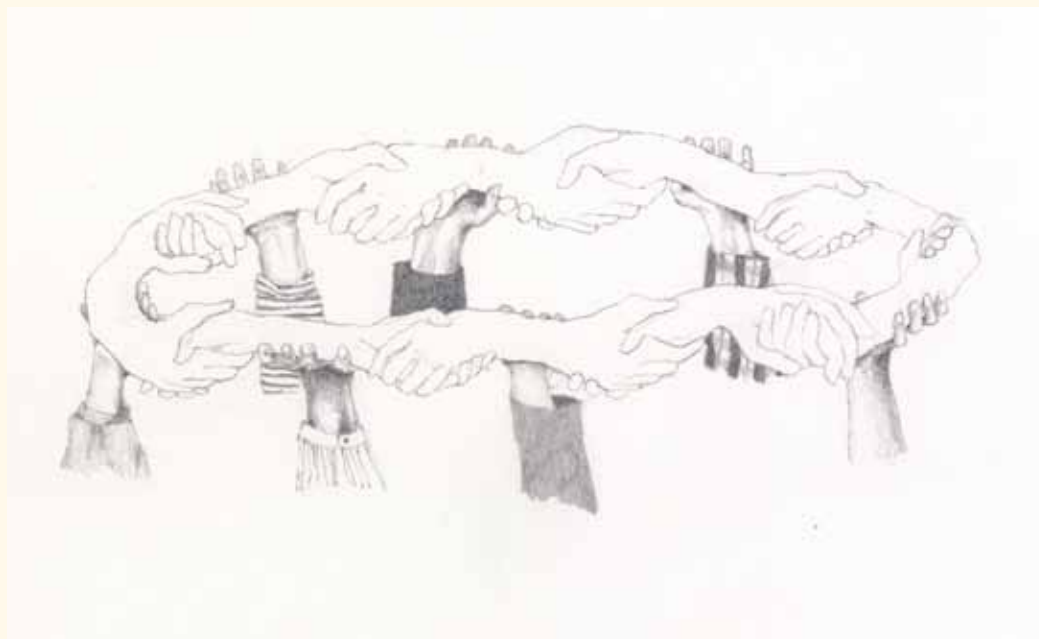
*solidarity* were repeated again and again. I saw two of them on TV at home with friends in Gdańsk. Despite differences in format and setting, the events were remarkably similar. The same kinds of pictures of the strike and the state of war, everyday life in communist Poland, dominos falling as the Eastern Bloc collapses, suffering and struggling people in other parts of the world. There was also the emphasis on freedom and solidarity in the choice of songs and other expressions; children as symbols of hope and the future; Polish flags, the red-and-white Solidarity logo, the constant presence of religion; and Lech Wałęsa with his fists raised – as a distilling emblem of this entire cultural legacy.<sup>31</sup>

It is interesting how elements from so many different contexts can be brought together in this public ritual (with both presentational and representational, secular and non-secular aspects) – John Lennon’s *Working Class Hero*, Leonard Cohen’s *Hallelujah*, and Bob Marley’s *Get Up, Stand Up* – and combined into something that becomes graspable here and now. The “here and now” constructed by joining these disparate components is the celebration of a Catholic labor and democracy movement with a distinct right-wing profile (even if some of the intellectuals who supported the strike and participated in the founding of Solidarity had Marxist backgrounds). It is obvious that the mash-up works as long as the various elements contribute to switching on the same emotional register.<sup>32</sup> In connection with the generational theme, it is also interesting to note how a broad program is offered in order to draw the younger generation to the celebrations. Macy Gray, for example, was a huge hit in Poland in the summer of 2001, which I remember from my fieldwork for a previous study, when her songs were played “everywhere” – and Rufus Wainwright’s version of *Hallelujah* is mainly known from the animated film *Shrek*. Both of these are examples of pop culture references that appeal to young audiences.

## THE YOUNG GENERATION

But what do Solidarity, the shipyard strike, and the Gdańsk Agreement of August 31, 1980 actually mean to young people today? Is the intensive campaign to ensure the survival of the memory mounted by groups like the European Solidarity Center a sign that the younger generations in Poland do not care enough about the history of their country? The Swedish historian Ulf Zander has thought about whether the reason for the lukewarm interest in Solidarity among youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that the strikes of the 1980s and the Solidarity movement were the *final* link in a long, tradition of rebellion in Poland, rather than the *starting shot* for something new.<sup>33</sup> He argues that young people are rejecting this and that they are weary of the constant harping on old injustices.<sup>34</sup> In my own thesis, *If We Are to Become Like Europe*, on the creation of identity among young, urban, well-educated women in Poland, the same tendencies emerge when interview respondents distance themselves from what they consider out of touch in the Poland that is to be integrated into the European Community and become part of the EU. These old and tired (and *Polish* – which is presented as old-fashioned in and of itself) notions are represented in their minds by the older generation, as well as the poorly educated and the rural population.<sup>35</sup>

Older people often remember the oppression of the communist era and the Cold War – and some of them even World War II<sup>36</sup> – while those born since the late 1970s essentially lack this experience, even if they have assimilated part of the “collective memory” through the stories of others. Among older people, reminders of the strike and the formation of Solidarity in August 1980 trigger enough memories and deep-



felt emotion to fill the anniversary celebration with meaning, while the younger generations need more far-reaching connections – references to the war-torn places of today and oppression in countries like Afghanistan, Tibet, and Sudan – in order to switch on a similar emotional register and engagement.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This article has described some aspects of the 2010 anniversary celebration of the strike at the former Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk in August 1980 and the formation of the Polish labor union and freedom movement Solidarity. The focus was on how these historic events are observed and remembered today – through various types of secular rituals and public events – and which elements are presented as important to hold onto and pass on to future generations. I have paid particular attention to concepts like freedom and solidarity, history and future, and the moral legacy from yesterday’s activists to today’s young generation and generations to come.

The depictions of the events in the 1980s and the production of history going on around them – continuously and in connection with the anniversary celebrations in 2010 – are, however, not entirely unproblematic. Historiography is always political, always commingled with power, just as presentations of historic phenomena in words, pictures, exhibitions, and stage productions of various kinds are always the result of specific interests and selection processes. Which groups and figures in modern Poland are out to score political points by constructing the past in this particular way? Timothy W. Luke writes:

**The politics of symbols are quite powerful, because they invoke ideals, recast realities, and manufacture meanings. Museum exhibits may not change public policies, but they can change other larger values and practices that will transform policy.<sup>37</sup>**

Which values and practices are being changed by presenting history, the present, and the future in this particular way? For whom is it important, for instance, that the Polish struggle is ascribed universal meanings, as emphasized in both the projects for children and youth and the anniversary concerts? Why is it so important that the young generation accepts the

baton and carries it forward? How are consensus, hegemonic discourses, and “objective truth” about the shipyard strike created, and how are other events linked with this in a logical and graspable chain of phenomena? For example: the election of a Polish pope, and the pope’s visit to Poland in the late 1970s → the strike in Gdańsk in 1980 → the founding and activism of Solidarity in the 1980s → partially free elections in 1989 → the fall of Eastern European communism in 1989–1990 → eastward enlargement of the EU in the 2000s. How are political phenomena shaped and influenced by such discursive linkages, today and in the future? What other voices and alternative versions are silenced and ignored in such a historiography? Further research – especially in the field of history and related disciplines – on the fall of Eastern European communism and its most iconic events, of which the shipyard strike in Gdańsk is one, is needed.

Many parallels to what happened in Poland and other countries in the former Eastern Bloc in the 1980s and 1990s were also drawn in connection with the Arab Spring in 2011. The comparisons describe courageous and desperate people rising up against the oppressive regimes in their countries in joint action – their actions guided by the hope of a better future. Many twists and turns are yet to come before anyone will be able to say with any certainty what the outcome of the revolts in North Africa and on the Arabian Peninsula will be – and what the historiography and memorial rituals surrounding these events will look like. Will they in any way resemble those surrounding the fall of Eastern European communism? Which events will be brought to the fore as special and symbolic? And, in such case, which galling voices will resist these descriptions? ✕

Note: All essays are scholarly articles and have been peer-reviewed by specialists under the supervision of Baltic Worlds’ editorial advisory board.

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- 3 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London 1985.
- 4 Since then, Bielecki has been a Member of Parliament for the conservative and Catholic – some would say right-wing populist – party PiS, “Law and Justice”. PiS was formed in 2001 by the twin brothers Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński, both with roots in Solidarity, who were in government in 2005–2007. Lech was the president of Poland until April 10, 2010, when he and a large number of political VIPs (including Anna Walentynowicz of Gdańsk strike fame) died in a plane crash – known as the “Smolensk Tragedy” – on the way to a ceremony in commemoration of the Katyń massacre of 1940, when some 4,500 Polish officers were shot to death by the Soviet military.
- 5 See also Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation*, Boston, MA, 1993; 2010 – a pamphlet written by the American political scientist and activist Gene Sharp. This similar manual has been used, for example, in Serbia to overthrow Milosevic and in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution in 2004. It is also said to have been a source of inspiration for the resistance movements in North Africa and on the Arabian Peninsula during the Arab Spring of 2011 (CBC News, 2011-02-24, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2011/02/23/f-carol-off-gene-sharp-middle-east.html>; retrieved 2011-08-12). Bielecki’s book seems to have similar ambitions, but has not, as far as I know, had any significant impact.
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- 7 European Solidarity Center, [http://www.ecs.gda.pl/About\\_us](http://www.ecs.gda.pl/About_us); retrieved 2010-10-26.
- 8 A historiography confirmed by the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, where one of the events staged for the celebration was a line of dominos set up along the former line of the wall, and where Lech Wałęsa, very symbolically, was given the honor of tipping the first of the dominos. (*Dagens Nyheter* web edition, 2009-11-09: <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/berlinmurens-fall-firades-under-envist-regnande>; retrieved 2011-12-05.)
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- 19 In Polish, WRON-a ORŁA NIE POKONA. This is a play on the name of the military organization WRON, which governed during the state of emergency in 1981–1983. With the suffixed “a”, *wron* becomes the word *wrona*, crow, which is set against the old Polish national symbol of the crowned eagle.
- 20 Bielecki, op. cit., p. 41.
- 21 Other things can be read into the quotation above – such as a reference to the so-called war on terrorism, in which Poland has been one of the allies of the United States and the former Bush administration.
- 22 “Historia Solidarności piórkem Jacka Frankowskiego” [The history of Solidarność from the pen of Jack Frankowski], in *Tygodnik Solidarność* [Solidarity weekly] 2010-08-31.
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- 32 Ibid., p. 108.
- 33 Compare this with that which has been said and written about the miners’ strike in Kiruna, in northern Sweden, and how this strike ended an epoch of consensus solutions during the postwar era and entailed the beginning of something else (see Robert Nilsson’s thesis proposal, *Den stora gruvstrejken i Malmfälten: Görandet av en historisk händelse* [The great miners’ strike in the Swedish ore fields: The making of a historical event], Department of History, Stockholm University, 2010-09-28, p. 5).
- 34 Ulf Zander in *Mera historia* [More history], op. cit.
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- 36 In addition, the anniversary of the German invasion of Poland, and thus the starting shot of World War II, coincides with the anniversary of the strike: at dawn on September 1, 1939, the German battleship Schleswig-Holstein opened fire on Westerplatte in Gdańsk. For this reason, a solemn memorial service is held every year with the laying of wreaths and military presence at the monument on the site. In 2009, the memory of seventy years of oppression was also linked with the same anniversary in Poland: 1939–1989, precisely the years from the outbreak of World War II with the invasion of Poland until the end of the Cold War with the partially free elections in Poland, which brought a landslide victory for Solidarity and were followed by the Velvet Revolution and the fall of communist regimes across Central and Eastern Europe. Poland was written into history as the center of these events – and the shipyard strike in August 1980 is understood by many as that which drove and made possible these developments in the former Eastern Bloc (see, e.g. the official anniversary website 1939–1989: *It all began in Poland*, <http://www.3989.pl/en,d15,home.html>; retrieved 2011-12-01).
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# HUMAN RIGHTS IN RUSSIA GOING BEYOND THE PERILS OF ACTIVISM



Human rights activism in Russia can be a dangerous ordeal for those involved in it. One only needs to recall the killings of prominent human rights activists and lawyers like Natalia Estemirova and Stanislav Markelov. Moreover, the Duma introduced NGO legislation in 2006 and 2012 that will likely curtail the work of human rights organizations and their foreign financial sponsors. The international press incessantly reports on the immediate negative effects of these laws for human rights associations. How do these dedicated human rights lawyers and activists nonetheless manage to advance human rights in Russia?

In June 2012, Freek van der Vet spoke with Valentina Melnikova, leader of Soldiers' Mothers, Oleg Kozlovsky, blogger, protest organizer, and political analyst, and Vanessa Kogan, executive director of Russian Justice Initiative, on the current state of human rights activism in Moscow.

by **Freek van der Vet**  
photos **Joris Besseling**

## PROTECTIVE MOTHERS

“I have been working for these civil organizations for such a long time; we have survived so many new situations.”

Valentina Melnikova has seen it all: the aftermath of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh from 1989 to 1991 and the two violent conflicts in the Chechen Republic of 1994–1996 and 1999–2005. As the acting director of the Union of Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia (UCSMR; *Soyuz Komitetov Soldatskikh Materei Rossii*), Melnikova has been lobbying for the past twenty-four years for a contract-based army and for giving free legal aid to conscripts who want to avoid the obligatory military service. The organization monitors human rights violations in the Russian army. Hazing, or *dedovshchina*, is still practiced among conscripts and is allegedly the cause of many suicides and other non-battle deaths. Their work has often been compared to that of the Argentinean Madres de Plaza de Mayo, who demanded the truth about what happened to their children who had disappeared during the military dictatorship. According to the sociologist Amy Caiazza, the work of the Soldiers' Mothers has been so successful because they used their own roles as responsible mothers protecting their children, children at the mercy of an irresponsible state.<sup>1</sup> Adopting the role of the mother made them a respectable organization, often bringing them to places where other human rights activists were not allowed to venture. They were given access to some military barracks and were able, in some regions, to establish close cooperation with military officials and prosecutors.

“Some groups have been active since 1988. We are celebrating our twenty-fourth anniversary. Can you

imagine a female organization that has fought the army for this long? This is absolutely unique. We are not victims, but a true human rights organization with specific goals. Only one of our original demands has remained unfulfilled since the beginning: Russia has not changed the obligatory military service to a voluntary service. That is why we continue to work, which is of course remarkable in view of the difficult times we have had: a new political regime, a new economic system, and new people in positions of responsibility in the army. And that is to say nothing of the wars we have had. Our first war was in Nagorno-Karabakh from 1989 to 1990. Then we gathered on Red Square. Now everybody is complaining, ‘They don’t allow us to organize protests.’ But back then, we didn’t even ask for permission!

“There are a lot of people working in the regions who solve their problems on the local level. They understand that it is not necessary to turn to Putin with every little problem. Our experience tells us that you need to try to solve issues on this level: raise awareness, make new contacts, and correctly formulate the claims you make. You know, we don’t work through the Internet. Of course, people can send us e-mail or text messages, but they have to come to us. We want to see their papers, documents, and applications. Imagine a big country with several hundreds of committees of soldiers' mothers. They all established themselves. We can’t force each other to do things. That was also a big internal problem of the organization.”

**The UCSMR's local** offices became hubs where conscripts could go for legal aid, especially during the two conflicts in the Chechen Republic. The Chechen

To fight without being a victim. And not stop fighting when you are no longer victimized.



conflicts left many casualties, both in the Russian federal forces and among the civilian population. During the winter of 1994, Russian military forces captured Grozny, Chechnya's capital, to regain control over the republic which had just announced its independence. The conflict ended in a peace treaty. Yet, after a series of apartment bombings in 1999 and the spread of the conflict to the neighboring republic of Dagestan, Russia initiated a second "anti-terrorist" military campaign. Some activists embarked on a risky journey to the Chechen Republic during the first military campaign – where many young conscripts were fighting against the Chechen armed forces – to save their sons from prisoner of war camps. They were able to get some of them released.

"When the first Chechen conflict started, a lot of people came to us for help every day. Every day 200 to 250 people came, which was awful, of course. Journalists often ask me, 'When was your work harder: back then, or now?' I answer, 'It was tough during the Chechen War, it has never been that difficult, and I hope it never will be again.' It was terrible. We turned out to be one of the few women's organizations that resisted this war. Of course, there were a lot of people who opposed it and who complained to Yeltsin. But we helped the wave of people who sought protection because they did not want to participate in the war or were looking to liberate those who were held captive there.

"Now, in Chechnya, nothing can be done. We have 600 people who have been lost without a trace since the first Chechen War. These 600 people lay in dozens of graves in the territory of the Chechen Republic. In 1998 there was a budget for the exhumation and identification of these lost soldiers and citizens and for

**"WE HAVE 600 PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN LOST WITHOUT A TRACE SINCE THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR. THESE 600 PEOPLE LAY IN DOZENS OF GRAVES IN THE TERRITORY OF THE CHECHEN REPUBLIC."**

their return to their relatives for burial. Some remains were found, but a special investigation team was never allowed to go there. They still have not returned the remains. Besides, there are only two brigades left there, and we have good contact with the prosecutor in that area, so there are actually few problems arising there."

Valentina Melnikova remains optimistic about the current situation in the Russian military. Mandatory military service was cut to a one-year term in 2008. According to Melnikova, her group's connections to the military prosecutor allowed them to file legal claims

against the Russian and Soviet military.

"Our experience is enormous. The history of our organization has been quite successful. Especially in the last two years, thanks to our own efforts, Medvedev and Minister of Defense Anatoliy Serdyukov have changed the situation in the army; they have a more humane approach to the army. The violence has decreased. Since 2008, military service has been shortened. In the past three years, under the authority of Medvedev, serious conflicts have almost disappeared. Officers no longer cover up violations. I think a good recent development is that officers are no longer afraid to talk with parents. It was quite surprising for us when we were told by the parents themselves that they had direct contact with the officers about their sons. We never had this before, not in the Soviet army and not for a long time afterwards. The problem we faced in the Soviet Union was that its military system was completely closed. They said nothing, published nothing, and accepted no complaints. The first thing we heard from the parents was that they were generally forbidden to visit the barracks, and when they were allowed to visit, they saw that the conditions were horrible. Their visits improved the way we gathered information on the situation in the army. We were able to identify the problem. After that, you only need to find somebody whom you can turn to with these issues.

"But who can you talk to if the system is closed? The military is basically inaccessible. We thought, instinctively, to approach the military prosecutor. We choose the right path, because we knew more than the prosecutor knew. Because of our courage [laughs] we started to become partners. In this way we acquired the ability to react fast: when a mother comes to us with a complaint about her sick son in a military unit

**What remains is abolition of mandatory military service. Political top dogs have been advocating that too.**



in Khabarovsk for instance, why would we contact the military commanders? I wouldn't even have known how to contact these barracks back then when nobody had mobile telephones. They only had special military telephone lines. The prosecutor always had a telephone and a fax, so we just had to pick up the receiver and call."

**In their search** for new networks, the UCSMR sought to gain influence in the Russian parliament. In Russia, NGO activity and opposition party politics often overlap. The Russian parliamentary elections in December 2003 were a watershed moment for Russian politics, consolidating the dominance of the United Russia party (*Edinaya Rossiya*) in the Duma. Democratic parties, like Yabloko and the Union of Rightist Forces (*Soyuz Pravykh Syl*) lost most of their seats. As United Russia became the focus of political power, the UCSMR rose to high popularity among the population – so high that it decided to enter the political arena by forming a political opposition party in 2003.

"In 2003, in December, there were parliamentary elections. The next morning my colleagues from the region called me and asked, 'Valya, what are we going to do? Whom are we going to work with?' Everybody understood that these elections were a political disaster. We understood that there would be nobody to talk to in the Duma. We organized a meeting with about fifteen people, where we discussed whether we should combine our efforts to make one big human rights organization, and thus lose our own official status as Soldier's Mothers. Another option was to create a political party ourselves. It would not be a problem with our wide network. So that is what we did. We started to recruit members. But ten days after our first congress, the Duma changed the law on political parties. From then on, the number of members necessary to form a political party changed from 10,000 to 50,000. So establishing a political party became practically impossible. We didn't have the resources to travel to all the different municipalities to gather all these people to support us. We tried, though. We still have 25,000

applications lying safely in our archives somewhere. But then the Republican Party approached us with a proposal to join them, which we did. In the end, however, we were not registered."

The Republican Party was banned by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation in March 2007. Valentina Melnikova and her colleagues in the party filed a complaint before the European Court of Human Rights (No. 12976/07), claiming that the Russian state had violated their right to freedom of assembly and association. On September 15, 2011, the European Court decided in favor of the applicants (plaintiffs) and ruled that the dissolution of the party had been disproportionate. Melnikova says that what happened afterwards was unique: the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation quashed its earlier decision to dissolve the party. The party could continue to exist.

As an NGO leader with many years of experience, overcoming political and bureaucratic obstacles has become part and parcel of her everyday work. She believes in the path through the legal system: "I have always said you need to apply to the courts. If you believe that you are right, sooner or later you will obtain your rights."

Melnikova reminisces on her own first protests: "Nobody knows how many protests we have visited and how many people we have gathered! There is a big picture on the Internet of the protests in 1990 on Manezhnaya Square in Moscow. We were standing there with a banner that read 'Return our soldiers from the Caucasus'. I see a lot of young people today at these protests. I even went when it was freezing. This is also a wave of action that helps people to articulate their grievances. This wave comes from people who are able to organize something. I am almost jealous of them! These protests are good, because we practically never had them before. The communication between human rights organizations back then was of course much harder. We did not have many phones and did not have the Internet back then. A letter could take two weeks. Today those problems have disappeared. We have a totally different country now where communication is just easier." ✕

## INVISIBLE BEHIND THE PROTESTS

Oleg Kozlovsky, blogger, activist, and PhD candidate, belongs to the new generation of activists that provoked the current wave of protests. Like an invisible hand, Kozlovsky plans the protests, tweets about them, and tries to unite the opposition. However, protesting is never spontaneous, but always follows precise planning and timing. The summer is a low season for demonstrations: "It doesn't make much sense to organize protests during the summer; people have other things to think about." Like many contemporary young political activists, Kozlovsky was first active in a political opposition party in the early 2000s. In his case, it was the Union of Rightist Forces (*Soyuz Pravykh Syl*; SPS) that nurtured his taste for opposition politics and activism.

**The early and middle** 2000s were a crucial time in the mobilization of protest. In Ukraine, Georgia, and Serbia, the popular youth movements Pora!, Kmara, and Otpor sparked the "color revolutions" that eventually led to the overthrowing of the sitting presidents at that time. These mass demonstrations inspired international hopes of a transition towards a democracy in those states. The revolutions were contagious, generating similar mass protests in the region. In 2005, Russian youth activists attempted to emulate the success of these movements by creating the movement Oborona ("Defense") in St. Petersburg and Moscow. They copied the logo of the Serbian youth movement Otpor: a clenched fist in a black circle.

"Oborona was a grassroots democratic youth movement based on non-violent resistance and other legal techniques. It never had a vertical structure, but was a network of regional branches. The St. Petersburg branch is still active, whereas the Moscow branch has become virtually non-existent. Oborona's main goal was to make Russia into a democratic, free country without censorship, with fair elections and all the basic democratic institutions in place. Oborona was different from the opposition at that time because it was very outspoken. Most organizations at that moment practiced self-censorship: they would never attack Putin and say he was responsible for this or that. I remember when I was a member of the SPS youth group, we were planning a protest in Moscow that was connected with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. I prepared a press release and an official statement that accused Putin of supporting Viktor Yanukovich [the president of Ukraine who lost the 2004 elections after the Orange Revolution] in the unfair Ukraine elections. When the SPS spokesperson looked at the statement and press release, he struck out every reference to Putin. He said, 'Our approval rating is four percent; his is seventy percent. When those figures are reversed, we can start criticizing him.' That was the general attitude back then. I didn't see much use in maneuvering within this political system when it clearly did not want the opposition to have any influence, to be anything but a shield or an alibi. Of course Oborona was inspired by the Orange Revolution. Everybody saw how effective mass protest can





**“WHEN I TOLD PEOPLE LIKE MY CLASSMATES AT THE UNIVERSITY THAT I WAS DOING SOMETHING WITH POLITICS OR PROTESTING, THEY COULD THINK UP A COUPLE OF EXPLANATIONS FOR THAT: EITHER I WAS GETTING INTO GOVERNMENT OR I WAS JUST CRAZY.”**

be and that you can achieve results. Youth can be important in that way.

“A lot of well-known people in Russia’s civil society used to be active in Oborona. It was like a school for them. Some are now in the liberal opposition groups, some in the left wing, others in the media as journalists. Like Ilya Yashin [former leader of the youth movement of the democratic party Yabloko] and the *Ekho Moskvy* journalist Irina Vorobyeva. They are pretty much everywhere, a new generation of activists.”

Since the 2011 parliamentary elections, the streets of Moscow have seen abundant public protests that gathered tens of thousands of people against the ruling United Russia party and the current government under the presidency of Vladimir Putin. Kozlovsky is an active blogger and uses his Twitter account to inform a large audience in Russian and English on current political affairs and ongoing demonstrations.

“You could probably sense a change on the Internet. Even among some Internet users. The first change was that people’s attitudes began to change towards civic activism. Five years ago, when I told people like my classmates at the university that I was doing something with politics or protesting, they could think up a couple of explanations for that: either I was getting into government or I was just crazy. That was usually sufficient explanation for them. But over the years more people are getting engaged in charitable campaigns, to benefit children for instance. It has nothing to do with politics, but people at least began to feel that they had some responsibility in society. We did not notice any radical change; we could only see that the society was becoming more tolerant towards this kind of protest activity.

In 2011, this process began to accelerate sharply and the approval ratings of United Russia began to fall towards the end of that year. Even on the night of the parliamentary elections, there were only a couple of hundred people protesting. Just the usual suspects: activists who had already been protesting all these years. But the other day it was around 10,000 people, which was a big protest for Moscow. And later the number of people grew further.”

**Much of the work** in organizing public protests occurs behind the scenes. Kozlovsky acknowledges that much of his work in the creation of the social movements is covert. The education of a new generation of activists and NGO leaders is a long-term process. Oborona taught Kozlovsky and his peers about political activism in Russia today. With this experience in mind, he appreciates educating a new generation of future activists.

“I was just like many others who used their blogs and participated in the protests. Most of the time I used the blog and Twitter to discuss political issues. My role has been to make all this happen in the long run. Maybe two years ago I decided, well, that I need to concentrate on the long-term preparation of the next generation of activists and civil society leaders. That is why I created a foundation, an NGO that organizes training for promising young civil activists. We organize conferences on new technologies for civil society organizations. It was mostly the invisible work of helping these activists become more knowledgeable and effective.”

Besides participating in numerous demonstrations, such as the Dissenters’ Marches and the Strategy 31 protests, Kozlovsky has been involved in various attempts to unite the opposition into a single social movement. After setting up Oborona, he became an active broker in other opposition movements and political parties, such as the United Democratic Movement Solidarnost (meaning “Solidarity”, a political wink to the Polish trade union movement Solidarność). The movement assembled a number of former opposition activists and politicians, including the former chess world champion Garry Kasparov, the SPS leader Nikita Belykh, and members of the Russian United Democratic Party Yabloko.

“Solidarnost is different from Oborona. It is a high-profile organization. People like Garry Kasparov helped to give the movement some of its initial fame. While Oborona was just saying, ‘we want democracy, whoever wins the elections’, Solidarity has a more thorough program, including plans for economic, domestic, and international policies. We think of it as a kind of proto-party, because it was impossible to register as a political party back in 2008 when it was founded. So they created a movement. Most of it has now joined the coalition of Solidarnost, Kasyanov’s People’s Democratic Union, and Vladimir Ryzhkov’s Republican Party.

“It will take some time for the political parties to know whether they can get enough support. It will depend on the leadership and whether they are pragmatic enough to create coalitions with other parties. Or will they be ‘ambitious’ and get their 0.2 percent of the votes? I will see what kind of approaches these

**What could have been portrayed as a united front is actually a coalition of networkers.**



parties have, and then maybe later I will join one of them. Oborona, from the start, wanted a united opposition, when I was their coordinator. Back in 2006 this approach began to prevail when the Other Russia coalition [under the leadership of Garry Kasparov] was created. It was a time when left-wing groups, National Bolsheviks, and liberal groups came together and found that they had a lot in common in their immediate goals. From this initiative came the Dissenters' March movement, for instance. Oborona was also among the founders of that coalition. From 2006 to 2008 I was part of the leadership of the Other Russia coalition, and I think we did a lot to bring together all these ideological groups, to show them that while people have different opinions, they are also citizens of this country. They may have different answers to questions, but in the end we can find some compromises and solutions. There is a new atmosphere in Russia. At the protests you can see people with red flags, LGBT activists, nationalists, all of them together at the same square. No quarrelling and no fighting. There is no formal organization that unites them now, but a network of people. There is no need for this formal organization, when you have the Internet with its network structure."

**Despite the protesters'** optimism, the Russian authorities attempted to curtail their activity. In June 2012, President Vladimir Putin signed a new law that imposes high fines on those involved in the organization of street protests. *The New York Times* reported that this legislation will give "Russian authorities powerful leverage to clamp down on the large antigovernment street protests that began six months ago".<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Kozlovsky believes that these new measures will only increase the numbers of protesters on the street:

"I don't think that these new fines on protests will have a serious effect. When people are angry enough to protest, such measures only make things worse for the government, because then people have more reasons to protest. If people are fined, it will cause more outrage. They will have to sell their cars because of this. It is another reason for people to protest. Soon I will be the first who will be tried under this new law. Because we have purposely decided to challenge this law, and in particular one of its provisions that says that if you have been convicted of disobedience or a violation of public assembly laws over the past year, then you may not organize a protest. This is against the Constitution and even against common sense. You will be charged with a violation of public assembly laws because you have violated them in the past. We filed a notice that we are going to have a protest and that one of the organizers had been convicted of these offenses in the past year. The protest was banned of course, and we got arrested for it. Then we filed a lawsuit against the Moscow authorities. If we lose it, we will go to the constitutional court and later to the European Court of Human Rights to challenge the law itself. So we have already planned to take it to the higher court; this is a campaign that will perhaps take a year. The European Court will take a longer time though." ✕



## SEEKING JUSTICE AT THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**T**he organization Russian Justice Initiative (RJI) does not protest. Vanessa Kogan, RJI's executive director, firmly states, "No. To protest as an NGO would be absolutely inappropriate. We are absolutely not a partisan organization. We do not care who the president is as long as rights under the European Convention are protected. I really think that should be the position of every NGO." In 2002, a few Dutch human rights defenders established RJI to aid victims of grave atrocities in Chechnya. Between 2001 and 2012 they lodged hundreds of complaints before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg on disappearances, torture, and indiscriminate bombings that occurred during the anti-terrorist military campaign in Chechnya. The ECtHR is the international tribunal of the Council of Europe that protects the rights guaranteed under the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights. Citizens of the 47 Council of Europe member states (including Georgia, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Turkey) can lodge individual claims with the Court when they fail to obtain justice at home. The Chechen applicants are often family members of people who disappeared after having been arrested by armed men. Most of those who disappeared were never reunited with their families.

Kogan became the executive director of RJI after working for the legal office of Human Rights Watch in New York. She recalls that, in 2011, RJI experienced firsthand the bureaucratic restrictions on NGO registration. The NGO was registered in Utrecht, the Netherlands, but primarily works from its Moscow main office:

"RJI always was a Dutch NGO in a technical sense, but the overall majority of the staff has always been Russian. There has never been a permanent office in Utrecht. So it is just a matter of the configurations that will allow you to work most efficiently and get around the restrictions. The NGO law that came into force in 2006 has much more restrictive or draconian provisions regulating the activities of foreign NGOs. One of

those provisions has to do with the actual registration of the office. What happened to us was that we made a mistake in our required reporting. We acknowledged this mistake: it was not intentional, but a human error. But still, they struck us out of the registry, just like that. They have the power to do that under Russian law. They don't have the power to do that to a Russian NGO, however. You can only strike out a Russian NGO by court order. So you have a little bit more protection. But it was quite a shock when we received the letter that stated that 'you don't exist any more!'"

Instead, RJI created another partner organization, Astreya, a Russian NGO: "Well, the shell of it already existed, which was fortunate. Basically it was the foresight of some former staff members. The organization had already had registration problems in 2006–2007 when the NGO law came into force and all the foreign NGOs were obliged to reregister. And RJI failed to reregister twice as a branch office. So after the second rejection they set up this Astreya as a backup, but then we were registered on the third attempt. Luckily we kept Astreya."

**Despite the bureaucratic** problems it has faced, RJI assists hundreds of clients in bringing their complaints before the ECtHR. The organization has been vital in voicing the grievances of Chechen civilians on the international stage. While the overall majority of their clients are family members of people who have disappeared, they also represent victims of torture, and people who lost their relatives during aerial bombings of their villages. A typical aspect of disappearances is that authorities deny involvement. Consequently, these families have limited access to domestic courts. RJI gives them free legal aid, lodging approximately 200 complaints across Russia's borders with the ECtHR. The NGO has been immensely successful, winning close to 100 percent of its claims against the Russian state, with the Court finding violations of fundamental rights such as the right to life and protection from torture. In addition, the Russian authorities have had to pay financial compensation to the applicants.

**Seeking justice is not about mobilizing majorities. It is about encouraging individuals.**



“At the moment we are still working on what is considered RJI’s traditional mandate, which concerns the most serious violations of the Convention in the North Caucasus: disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and in connection with these, arbitrary detention and violation of the right to a fair trial. We have also, in the past year or so, been expanding our mandate. We have started looking into other violations that we consider systematic in the North Caucasus. The area that we have chosen is women’s rights in the North Caucasus. Which is a rather lesser known and much more hidden aspect – as it often is – of the human rights situation there.”

Although the Russian authorities have often paid the compensation in a timely fashion to successful applicants, Kogan is concerned that the authorities will not take any further measures to find alternative forms of redress for them. The Russian state established a special investigation unit to investigate the violations named in the ECtHR’s rulings, yet Human Rights Watch reports that such investigations are carried out ineffectively.<sup>3</sup> Reparations concern more than financial compensation alone, as disappearances in particular have a profound emotional, social, and economic impact on the lives of those left behind:

“There is a broader idea for reparations for the victims of armed conflict and disappearances, including returning the body, making an effort to locate and exhume mass graves, and identifying remains. For the traditions of the North Caucasus, which is predominantly Muslim, not being able to bury the remains is a great hardship. As often as we hear the applicants say that they want the perpetrators punished, they equally say that they want to know what happened and get the bodies back and bury them. That is an equal concern to them. But in cases concerning disappearances that have gone to the European Court, the persons have never been found. To my knowledge no body has ever been identified and returned to the relatives.”

Since only few bodies have been identified by the authorities, the relatives of disappeared people live in uncertainty about the fate over their loved ones. In its numerous judgments against the Russian state, the ECtHR has adopted the rule that, after a period of

**“WE ARE TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO THEM THAT, BECAUSE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE, THE PERSON IS LEGALLY DEAD. BUT THAT NO ONE CAN SAY THAT THE PERSON IS ACTUALLY DEAD.”**

three to five years of disappearance without any news, a person can be presumed dead. Kogan indicates that RJI must explain to its clients what the Court’s judgment, and the abstract human rights language in it, mean:

“One thing that applicants in disappearance cases also tend to get upset about when they read the Court’s judgment is that the ECtHR says that their relatives are dead. Obviously that is very upsetting, because as long as they do not have the body, many of the applicants continue to say, ‘They are not dead, they are going to come back.’ So that’s sort of a reality of working with people. We are trying to explain to them that, because of the circumstances of the case, the person is legally dead. But that no one can say that the person is actually dead. We also explained them to see a positive side to the Court’s finding that the person can be presumed dead, because it holds the state to a much higher degree of responsibility.”

Since 2005, the number of ECtHR rulings against the Russian state from Chechnya has skyrocketed. As these judgments began to accumulate, RJI, together

with its partner organizations, started to lobby for domestic prosecution of the perpetrators under Russian criminal law. According to Human Rights Watch, the Russian state has failed to start effective investigations into the various violations, failing in the long run to bring perpetrators to justice.<sup>4</sup>

“Prosecution is not the only way to provide redress. But it is an important way to provide justice, especially because the government has undertaken nothing else in the way of reparations. In Latin America there were amnesty laws, but there were also other forms of reparations the government provided, like official apologies. There was an official process for moving on. But in the case of the North Caucasus, there has been absolutely nothing. Impunity is not a value of the Council of Europe. I think that is more of a value statement than a legal standard though. But we are very concerned that prosecutions will not take place. One of the perpetrators was put into custody and was tried for certain offenses. He was found guilty of exceeding official powers, but later he was amnestied. There is an amnesty law that has been in force since 2006. This was a very disappointing outcome for us. It is a case that we have been writing about furiously to the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers [the body responsible for the execution of the ECtHR’s judgments] and we’re going to appeal to revoke the application of the amnesty act. But it certainly is an indication of the government’s lack of will to start prosecutions. In addition to the amnesty law there is also the problem of limitation periods. These crimes were committed many years ago. Of course we argue that many of these crimes are crimes against humanity or even war crimes, but of course trying to get the Court to establish that is, to put it mildly, an uphill battle.” ❌

Note: The interview with Valentina Melnikova was conducted before Anatoliy Serdyukov stepped down as defense minister of the Russian Federation in November 2012.

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# BECOMING FULL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

by **Yulia Gradskova** illustration **Ragni Svensson**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the ideas of progress and development were widely discussed in Russian society. Many Russian politicians and intellectuals saw their country as lagging behind advanced European countries in industrial, political, and social development. Indeed, starting with the agrarian reform of 1861, the Russian government made several attempts, not all of them successful, to reform one aspect or another of the political and social system. While the most important of these attempts was the creation of the Duma, the first Russian Parliament, there were other modernization projects resulting from the 1905 revolution, such as new policies on the colonization of Siberia<sup>1</sup> and the reorganization of medical services.<sup>2</sup> The attempts at modernization were made in an atmosphere of growing social discontent and under the direct, often openly violent pressure of the state's political opponents. The declared aspirations of change of the political and social actors, despite many differences, usually coincided in the use of a rhetoric of "progress" and "culture".<sup>3</sup>

The ideas for modernizing Russia were many; here I will look at just one theme: the discussions and activities conducted in connection with what was called the "women's question". At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of women's organizations in Russia demanded rights for women, and many intellectuals and politicians discussed the need to improve women's work, education, and health.<sup>4</sup> Those who defended women's political and social rights often pointed out that Russia's industrial and cultural development could not be achieved without improving the situation of women. For example, many participants in the first All-Russian Women's Congress (St. Petersburg, 1908) found that the state, if it was interested in progress, should pay attention to the issues of women's rights.<sup>5</sup> As for the Bolsheviks, the existing research shows that they also used terms of progress and its opposite, backwardness, in discussing the "women's ques-

tion": the backwardness of Russian peasant society as well as that of women was hindering revolutionary activism, and later, the progress of socialism.<sup>6</sup>

**ALTHOUGH DISCUSSIONS OF** the "women's question" as such are rather well studied, the problems of emancipatory projects concerned with non-Russian women have only recently started to draw researchers' attention.<sup>7</sup> Looking at the connections and contradiction between ideas of "progress" and "development" in combination with different approaches to the emancipation of Muslim women of the Volga-Ural region will help to expand our knowledge of the multiethnic dimensions of the "women's question" in the Russian context.

The geographic focus of this article is the Volga-Ural region before and after the Bolshevik Revolution. The region is a multiethnic one, historically inhabited mostly by people belonging to Turkic and Finno-Ugric language groups. It was conquered by the Grand Duchy of Muscovy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The region is known for several uprisings of the local population against Russian rule and for a very unique Muslim Enlightenment movement, Jadidism, which developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>8</sup> The Muslim population of the region consisted mainly of Tatars and Bashkirs, and the educated part of it had rather good connections to Muslim communities in other parts of the empire and abroad.

How was the "women's question" interpreted by the proponents of women's emancipation with respect to the Muslim women and at the regional level? How did the situation change in the period between February and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917? What was the specific early Soviet interpretation of the "women's question" in regard to the Muslim women of the region?

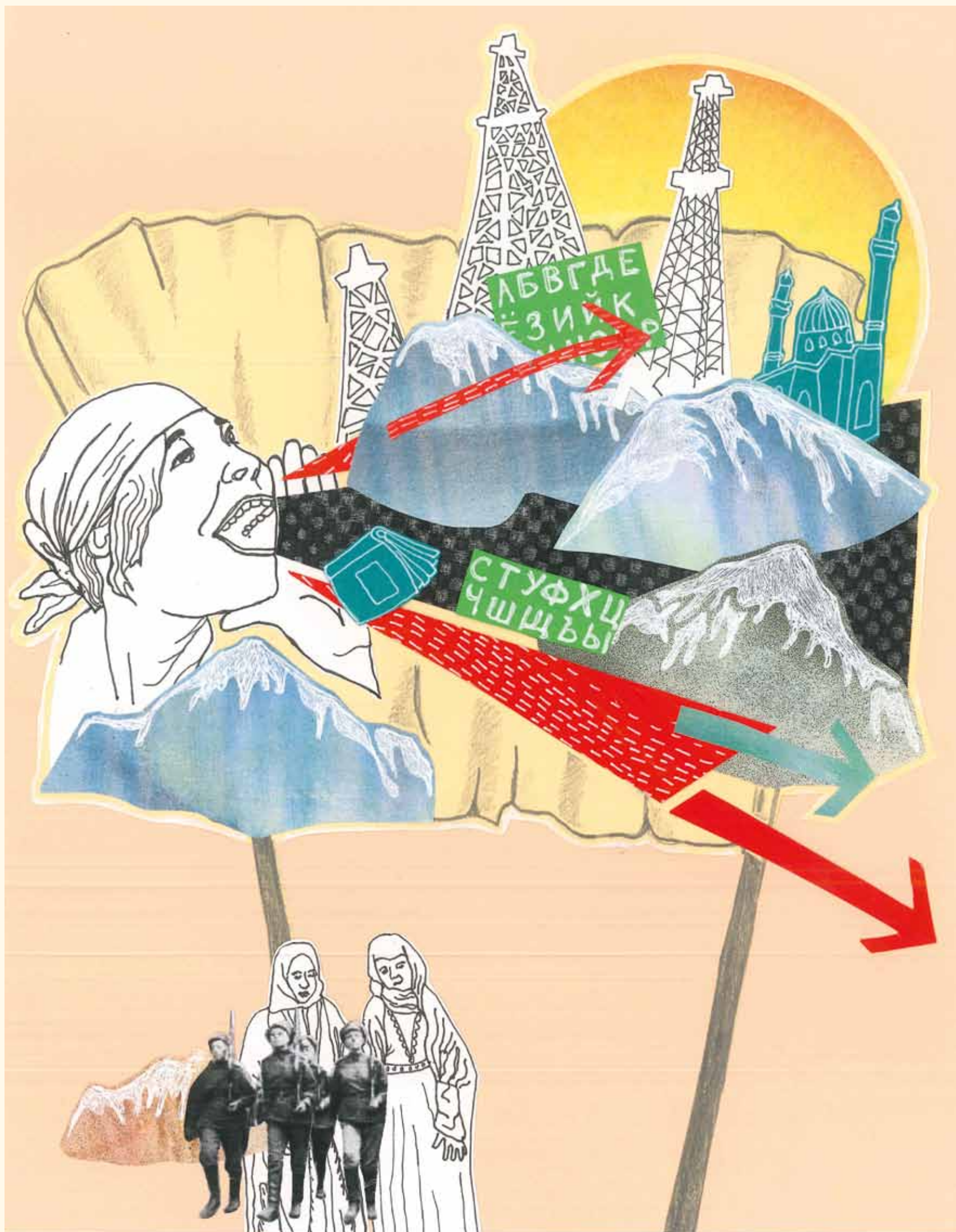
The sources are archive materials (in particular materials of the Soviet Commission for the Improvement of the Work and Everyday Life of Women,<sup>9</sup> 1926–1930, State Archive of the

Russian Federation), published documents on women's activism in Tatarstan on the eve of the revolution, periodicals, and Soviet pamphlets.<sup>10</sup>

## **"MUSLIM WOMAN" AND "PROGRESS": DISCUSSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS ON THE EVE OF 1917**

The organization of the Russian Empire in the last period of its existence has been described by Jane Burbank as the "imperial rights regime", characterized by practices of particularity and localized ways of applying rights.<sup>11</sup> Still, we know that the attempts at Russification of the non-Russian part of the population were multiple, and consisted mainly in educational policy. The Orthodox civilizers hoped to Christianize the Muslim population of the empire, which was accused of bringing with it threats of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism.<sup>12</sup> As for the Muslim women, according to Azade-Ayse Rorlich, although the imperial government was "anti-feminist in its policies concerning Russian women on issues ranging from education to family law and citizen franchise and deaf to the demands of Russian women for emancipation" and "backed by the might of its bureaucratic structures and scholarly establishment", it nonetheless "adopted a 'feminist' stand in its dedication to the emancipation of Muslim women".<sup>13</sup>

In addition to propaganda for the education of Tatar and Bashkir girls in the Russian schools, the Russian government at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was campaigning with the help of Orthodox missionaries to spread knowledge about hygiene and medicine among Muslim women of the Volga-Ural region. These policies were supposed to help the central authorities to maintain control over families and child-raising. One example of this logic is found in a delation by Andrei, Archbishop of Ufa and Menzelinsk, published in





the newspaper *Kaspii*<sup>14</sup> soon after the February revolution. In his article, the Archbishop expressed fears that Muslims “could be separated from Russian life” as a result of the reforms — particularly the introduction of a multiethnic local management structure (*zemstvo*). The Archbishop insisted on the non-Russian people’s need for spiritual guidance, and saw the pamphlets on hygiene and home medicine for the Muslim population as particularly helpful.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, many Muslim intellectuals in different parts of empire began discussing the role of women in Muslim society.<sup>16</sup> One of the first to do so was Ismail Bey Gaspirali, a Tatar from Crimea and the founder of Jadidism, a new method of teaching in Arabic. After his third attempt, Gaspirali received official permission in 1905 to publish a special magazine for women, *Alemi Nisvan*.<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of the revolutionary year of 1917, Muslim women living in the Russian Empire could choose between several women’s publications that were produced in Kazan, Bahchisaray (Crimea) and Baku (Azerbaijan). The Jadidist plans for the cultural progress of the Muslim people of the empire also foresaw growing educational opportunities for women and girls — many Jadidists supported mixed education in primary schools — and several schools in different parts of the empire were preparing female teachers. Many Tatar women were very enthusiastic about becoming teachers. Nevertheless, the organization of Muslim girls’ schools that taught after the European system but in the Tatar language was seen with suspicion by Russian authorities, and some of the schools were closed.<sup>18</sup> Remembering that time, the well-known Tatar intellectual Rizaeddin Fahreddin (who was head of the Central Spiritual Directorate of Muslims in Ufa in the Soviet period up to his death) included in his book on famous women several Muslim women from Russia who, at the beginning of the century, “devoted their entire lives to education and to teaching girls”.<sup>19</sup>

As in other Muslim societies (such as Turkey for example),<sup>20</sup> the attempts to give girls a better education than in the past and to involve Muslim women in the social life of imperial Russia were presented by the Muslim reformers as contributing primarily to the well-being of family and children, and hence to the well-being of the whole Muslim society or the nation. In the context of increasing Russification, especially after the defeat of the revolution of 1905, as well as a general radicalization of the situation in Russia, direct connections between women’s education, women’s rights and the progress of the nation were made with increasing frequency.

**FINALLY, IT IS NECESSARY** to note that the development of notions of progress that included women’s emancipation contributed to the specific role that representatives of the imperial science on the Orient played in discussions on the future of Muslim peoples and women in Russia. According to Vera Tolz, many Orientalologists, while working for the progress of the empire, did not see support for local nationalisms and the rights of non-Russians as mutually contradictory.<sup>21</sup> Although the “women’s question” was not at the center of Orientalist interest, it was important to a few women in that profession. Thus the Kazan-born Russian Olga Lebedeva, a translator of poetry from several Asian languages, presented herself at the Congress of Orientalists in Algeria in 1905 as “serving the idea of the emancipation of Muslim women within the limits that were indicated by the Prophet, the founder of a teaching that is fully compatible with all recent cultural advances, provided it is correctly interpreted”.<sup>22</sup> Supporting those who were trying to change the situation of Muslim women without criticizing Islam, Lebedeva suggested that a view of the Muslim religion from this perspective could help Algerian Muslim women for example “to catch up to their European sisters”.

All actors advocating change — imperial officers, Muslim intellectuals and some Orientalologists — were looking at the situation through the lens of a developmental paradigm (“to catch up”, “to enlighten”). At the same time, while imperial officers saw the solution in the assimilation and de-Islamization of the non-Russian population, Muslim intellectuals saw the improvement of women’s situation as a prerequisite for the “progress of the nation”.

## THE WOMEN’S QUESTION AMONG RUSSIAN MUSLIMS IN 1917: BETWEEN DEMOCRACY, ANTI-COLONIALISM, AND NATIONALISM?

While women’s organizations, led by the Women’s Union for Equality, demonstrated in Saint Petersburg demanding equal political rights for women in connection with the end of the monarchy in March 1917,<sup>23</sup> many other organizations and groups (including nationalist ones) expressed rather similar demands in many parts of the empire, but in different contexts. Material from the newspaper *Kaspii*,<sup>24</sup> for example, leads us to suppose that, at least for some part of the Russian Muslim society, the idea of broadening rights for women appeared an obvious part of the social and political changes that would lead to “progress”. What arguments were used and what political measures were proposed?

Under the pressure of the central women’s organizations, the new legislation issued by the Provisional Government gave women the right to participate in the elections to the Constituent Assembly and local councils. The new legislation was seen positively by the Muslim politicians: the participation of women as voters and as candidates would increase the visibility of Muslims on the Russian political scene, and raise numbers of Muslims elected to office. Muslim women were therefore strongly advised to vote, first of all for the Muslim candidates.<sup>25</sup> In order to eliminate doubts with respect to women’s political participation, the Central Spiritual Directorate for the Muslims of Inner Russia, located in Ufa, used the image of women as mothers and looked for arguments in Sharia: “Because the Muslim Sharia does not limit women’s political rights, including their active and passive electoral rights, there is no obstacle from the point of view of Sharia to Muslim women’s participation in the electoral campaign.”<sup>26</sup>

Probably the most radical event of the time was the First Muslim Women’s Congress, which took place in Kazan in April 1917. The congress was attended by women from different parts of the empire, from St. Petersburg and Crimea to Central Asia, and it voted to adopt a resolution on the rights of Muslim women. In May of the same year, this resolution was also supported by the All-Russian Muslim Congress in Moscow.<sup>27</sup> The resolution of the Kazan congress made important statements on gender equality: it declared the political rights of women, their right to divorce and to marriage by consent, the prohibition of the bride price, and the right of women not to be secluded. The declarations were made with reference to Sharia law<sup>28</sup> to indicate that aspirations to such rights did not endanger the Muslim identity of the beneficiaries and had nothing to do with attacks on Islam by the Russian state. This resolution was one of the first to stress that women had a duty to participate in elections to the Constituent Assembly.

Furthermore, the Bureau of Muslim Women elected by the Congress prepared a pamphlet calling on all Muslim women in Russia (“Muslim sisters”) not to be passive in such a “historic time”. According to the pamphlet, Muslim women had to become “full members of society” in order to serve the

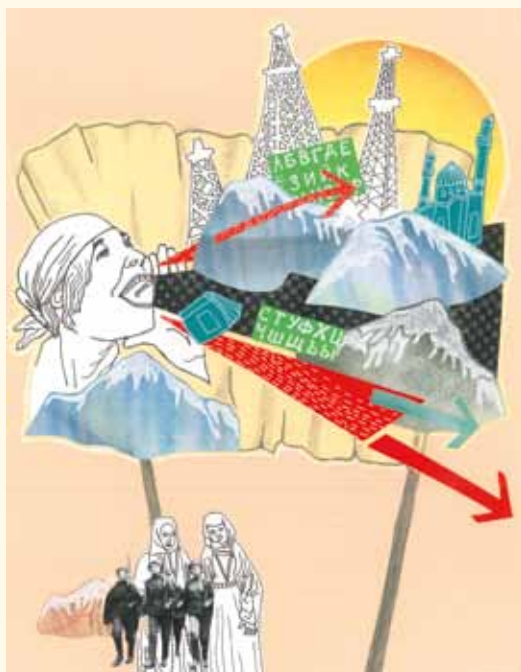
national interests and “not to burden men alone with the task of building the foundation of our national future”. If Muslim women would not take off the “chains of injustice and oppression”, then “our children, our young nation never would forgive this”,<sup>29</sup> the pamphlet stated. The period between February and October 1917 was when several Muslim Women’s Committees appeared in Russia.<sup>30</sup> The Committee from Crimea was presented by *Kaspii* as trying to “bring together all Tatar women in order to liberate them from centuries of slavery, and to awaken the spirit of citizenship in Crimean Tatar women, mothers of the free, democratic Russia”.<sup>31</sup>

Declaring women’s rights for the sake of the nation and with reference to Sharia laws was a rather widespread tactic that was followed in many documents issued around 1917, and even in some documents from the first years after the Bolshevik Revolution. Both of the Muslim Congresses that took place in the period between February and October of 1917 — one in May in Moscow and another in July in Kazan — took the women’s question seriously. Although the general atmosphere at the second Congress was much more conservative than at the first, its resolution still stated that “lack of clarity with respect to the solution of the women’s question in this historical moment could damage our national and cultural movement”. Indeed, the “women’s question” was seen by the Congress participants as a question that was important for the “whole nation” and not only for women.<sup>32</sup>

**IN ADDITION TO RECOGNIZING** equal rights in the political sphere, documents from 1917–1920 insist on many other changes in the status of Muslim women that would contribute to the nation’s well-being. For example, the resolution of the Kazan Women’s Congress contained a statement about the need for a health certificate for bride and groom before the religious wedding ceremony (*nikah*) could be performed; this was explained as necessary “for the health of the nation”.<sup>33</sup> Child marriages too were prohibited, not so much from the perspective of women’s rights, but in order to prevent “sick children” as the result of such marriages. The Kazan resolution insisted on 16 years as the earliest acceptable marriage age for brides (“in the North as well as in the South and East”) and demanded that the groom should guarantee that he would not take a second wife into his house (except on granting a divorce and maintenance to the first one). Finally, the right of women to divorce in case of “unhappy marriage” was also justified not only by the “woman’s suffering”, but by “bad conditions for children’s upbringing” in such a family.

## THE FUTURE OF THE REVOLUTION AND “WOMEN OF THE ORIENT” IN BOLSHEVIK POLICY OF BRINGING CULTURE TO THE MASSES

While the political aims and rhetoric of Bolshevik women’s liberation are well studied,<sup>34</sup> I would like to look here more closely at their application to the “women of the Orient” (*vostochnitsa*) — a broader concept that encompassed women from different ethnic and religious groups, and by which most of the non-Western, non-Slavic and non-Orthodox women living on the territory of the former Russian Empire were usually unified. This term, like *natsionalka* and *natsmenka* for women of national minorities, was usually used in the texts describing plans for the progressive development of society. Like activists of the nationalist movements in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the Bolshevik leaders and rank-and-file agita-



tors were living in a world where the ideas of progress, development and the common good were used by various actors to justify their policy plans. Thus women were also placed in the development/backwardness hierarchy created by the Bolshevik leaders. The conversion of the backward “woman of the Orient” into new, “cultured woman” of the socialist state implied scientific grounds for political actions. The “women of the Orient’s” cultural difference was to be reevaluated from the new, revolutionary perspective, and at the same time, the new day-to-day life of the “women of the Orient” had to be organized according to the latest achievements of science with regard to a healthy and prosperous lifestyle.

It is important to notice, however, that the question of Islam had a particular importance in the choice of paths to women’s emancipation. In the first post-revolutionary years, the Muslim population in Russia as well as abroad was seen by the Bolsheviks as an important ally on the way to World Revolution, and the Soviet government abstained from open attacks on Islam. As previous research shows, this helped to gain a certain support for Soviet reforms in the region. For example, the Muslim congress that took place in Ufa in 1923 expressed support for the Bolshevik project of cultural revolution, including support for the creation of mixed schools and secondary education for Muslim women,<sup>35</sup> while some Muslim intellectuals from the Volga-Ural region got an opportunity to implement their plans with respect to education.<sup>36</sup>

**WHILE MANY EARLIER** periodicals for Tatars and Bashkirs were closed down,<sup>37</sup> Soviet publications for and about Muslim women in the 1920s did not have a stable and coherent vision of Muslim customs and traditions, nor a vision of emancipated women. For example, in his pamphlet on the veil, Nikolai Smirnov, the future head of Soviet Orientalists, wrote that the covering of women’s bodies was a subject of debate among Muslim theologians.<sup>38</sup> He also made reference to Jadidist criticism of women’s seclusion (specifically, to Ismail Bey Gaspirali<sup>39</sup>). At the same time, Smirnov, like most authors of Soviet pamphlets, kept silent on the active involvement of women who did not refuse to follow their Muslim dresscode in work for the emancipation of women on the eve of the October Revolution.

Another pamphlet, published in Russian by the Women’s Council of Tatarstan in 1923 on occasion of International Women’s Day, also shows many contradictions in the evaluation of women’s situation and Muslim culture. The article “Tatar Women in the Years of Revolution” by Zora Baimbetova acknowledges the active participation of Muslim women in their own “emancipation” before the October Revolution

(mainly in the period between February and October 1917): “There was no Muslim congress where questions about the rights of women in the context of Islam and Sharia would not be discussed.” However, pre-Soviet organizations of Muslim women were now called “bourgeois” and thus presented as negative rather than positive historic examples.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the article presented the “woman of the Orient” as experiencing extreme exploitation due to religious and national traditions, a cliché that would be used daily during the entire Soviet period. Indeed, the Tatar woman is described in the article as “the most backward of the backward”, and subject to 1,000 times more discrimination than the Russian woman.<sup>41</sup> This was explained by the specific local situation, which combined economic and religious oppression. Soviet policies are described as contributing to the disappearance of the “passive, unmovable and oppressed Tatar woman”, thus constructing lack of initiative and activism as important features of “backwardness”.

With time the suspicions and fears of the Bolshevik government with respect to the Muslim population grew, and influenced most of the projects aimed at solving the “women’s question” in the Volga-Ural region. Due to lack of trust in combination with ignorance of local languages and traditions, the Soviet authorities needed help from specialists in Oriental studies. The latter were invited to take part in designing policies and publications in the 1920s. For example, the series of pamphlets on work with mothers and children from different ethnic groups of the “Orient” were published under the leadership of the Department of Health Care for Mothers and Children in 1927–1928, but the chief editor of the series was V. A. Gurko-Kriazhina, head of the national minorities section of the Agitprop department of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party and a member of the presidium of the Scientific Association of Oriental Studies. Each pamphlet started with an ethnographic description of the landscape and population, presented in a rather romantic style and clearly for an outside spectator.<sup>42</sup> The book on Tatar women, for example, contains ethnographic descriptions of a Tatar village and a Tatar wedding ceremony.<sup>43</sup> These exotic pictures were mixed up with the presentation of women’s lives as rather difficult and unjust: the Tatar woman was over-exploited, “man’s property”, a “commodity”, often having an “animal life”.<sup>44</sup> These portrayals were followed by examples of the Soviet “emancipation of women”, which included women’s participation in new communist activities and education and data on new kindergartens and maternity hospitals.

In 1926 the Bolsheviks decided to create a special commission concerned with helping women from the national minorities (or “backward women”, as they were frequently called in the commission’s internal correspondence) to co-exist with other Soviet citizens on the way to the communist future. The document establishing the Commission for the Improvement of the Work and Everyday Life of Women stressed the need to “combat the economic inequality of women and the inequality of their rights”, “prepare expert evaluations of the situation of working women for the various activities of the central institutions of the republics with respect to everyday life, the economy and rights”, and “draft proposals for new laws that could contribute to the improvement of women’s everyday life and work”.<sup>45</sup> Each of the autonomous republics of the Volga-Ural region had its own commission to work with local women. The archive documents show that the effectiveness of these commissions depended in large part on the energy and interest of their members, who were usually new Soviet civil servants busy with other responsibilities. For example, in the report of such a commission in Bashkortostan dated 1928, we read:

The regional institutions to date do not consider the work among nationalities as a part of their work; activities are always organized under pressure. This refers in particular to the activities that should be under the supervision of the regional department of education. This department did not organize any activity pursuant to the plans we made together.<sup>46</sup>

The “women’s question” is addressed by the Commission as if women needed a kindergarten of sorts on the path to cultural development, and accordingly its documents attest to many problems and difficulties. For example, a 1928 letter to the central Commission presented the situation in Tatarstan as a “precarious network of institutions for the national minorities” in spite of “the special role of preschool education for the emancipation of women of the national minorities, the improvement of their children’s health and the introduction of the new organizational forms of everyday life for the population of the national minorities”.<sup>47</sup>

It is easy to suppose that a lot of the projects and activity plans designed for the progress and development of “women of the Orient”, in spite of their emancipatory rhetoric and scientific elaboration, did not produce enthusiasm among the broader masses of women in the Volga-Ural region. A certain similarity of the Soviet emancipatory rhetoric to the civilizing rhetoric of the imperial center may have played an important role: once again the “backward”, non-Russian woman was expected to fulfill plans for her culturalization that had been devised in Moscow. With the beginning of forced collectivization in the early 1930s, the Commission lost its special mandate for the improvement of the work and everyday lives of “women of the Orient”, and most of the active participants in the early phase of the Soviet solution of the “women’s question” in the Volga-Ural region suffered imprisonment or death during the period of Stalinist repression.<sup>48</sup>

**IN CONCLUSION** IT could be said that in the Volga-Ural region as in other parts of Russia in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the “women’s question” played an important role in discussions and visions of modernization and development. However, interpretations and decisions on the solution of this “question” differed significantly.

The nationalist leaders of the region saw Muslim women as an important political force for national progress and development. Looking at the ideals of progress and culture, Muslim intellectuals were eager to find examples of them in Western Europe and Asia and, only secondarily, in Russia. During 1917 the role of Muslim women as independent political actors increased: women created new organizations and designed their own programs for the solution of the “women’s question” in the region and among followers of Islam. The women’s activism, inspired by the rhetoric and organizational forms common for the women’s movement in Europe and Russia, continued to present itself as an activism closely bound to the progress of the nation and as part of Muslim culture. The end of the Russian Empire in February of 1917 further strengthened the connections between the ideas of women’s emancipation and democracy among the people of the region.

**AFTER OCTOBER 1917**, the Bolsheviks preserved intact a substantial part of the emancipational rhetoric of earlier defenders of women’s rights for non-Russian (including Muslim) women, but introduced a class-based assessment of women’s activism. Still, the emancipation of all working women, regardless of their ethnicity, was declared to be an important goal of the new Soviet state. As part of the new goal, Muslim



women from the Volga-Ural region were to be educated and taught about their rights, and this educational campaign was seen as contributing to the development of the new socialist society. In the first post-revolutionary years the Bolshevik government saw Tatar and Bashkir women as important allies and was careful in its criticism of the Muslim religion as such.

Women's ignorance of their new rights and duties was seen by the Soviet authorities as an obstacle to progress which had to be overcome with the help of the new institutions like Commissions for the Improvement of the Work and Everyday Life of Women. The new institutions, however, like those of the imperial period, were designed centrally and lacked funding. Furthermore, the Bolshevik design of work for emancipation placed Russian and Slavic women in higher, more privileged positions on the scale of emancipation. The hierarchizing of women by their degree of "backwardness" was increasingly a reminder of old imperial hierarchies, at the same time that low-level activism aimed at national progress and development formulated locally (or the development of Tatar and Bashkir society and culture, in the case of the Volga-Ural region) became the object of punishment from the center. As a result, new interpretations of "progress" and "development" could not count on much support from the Muslim women of the Volga-Ural region, and with time, the Soviet central policy of solving the "women's question" in the region had to depend more and more on coercive measures. ❌

Note: All essays are scholarly articles and have been peer-reviewed by specialists under the supervision of Baltic Worlds' editorial advisory board.

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# COSMOPOLITAN VISIONS IN THE CAUCASUS

Anders Nordström holds a PhD in political science and is a research fellow at CBEES. He is currently studying the Council of Europe's monitoring processes in relation to Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan in anticipation of closer European integration. Nordström is particularly interested in how "European values" are communicated, interpreted, and understood in these protracted monitoring processes. He argues that this is an example of cosmopolitan politics wherein European and national regulatory processes are being interwoven and are influencing each other.

In April 2012, he joined the Uppsala Association of International Affairs on a trip to the South Caucasus and visited the capitals of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. He was trying to understand how the people there describe the situation, and what their outlook on the future was like. On this journey, he met with representatives of think tanks, universities, government agencies, the international community, the political opposition, and activists.

**Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan are neighboring states, and all of them aspire to membership in the EU. Are there any important common factors in these countries' perceptions of themselves?**

"The countries in the South Caucasus all position themselves in relation to an omnipresent threat of war and insecurity. They paint themselves as prisoners of geography and history in the hands of great powers that have balanced each other's interests."

Anders Nordström believes that the countries have generally pinned their hopes for a better future on attempts to climb out of their local context and connect to the global economy.

"There were hopes of commodity extraction and energy exports, but establishing ties with Europe and the Western world also represented a way of evading the influence of the traditional, regional imperial powers: Russia, Turkey, and Iran."

Another recurring picture of the situation was that policy was in something of a state of double paralysis, where international policy was decided by the great powers, and national policy determined by local oligarchies.

**How would you characterize these oligarchies?**

"These are the people who have succeeded in the complex and often very brutal nationalization, privatization, and globalization of economies after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and who, in order to secure their financial interests, have also felt compelled to be involved in politics and the media. For this reason, they are thought to control not only local business, but

also politics and media, and are well integrated in the top echelons of the global business world and world politics."

**What is the situation of people who are not oligarchs and who have not been able to profit from the economic transition?**

"The majorities of the populations live under basic conditions in what may be described as deindustrialized economies", Nordström explains.

The picture of super-rich and powerful oligarchies stands in sharp relief against the picture of under-employment and persistent poverty. The elderly person living on twenty or thirty dollars a month who could not afford to pay her electric bill was a story Nordström heard in all three countries. The rural areas in particular were portrayed as subsistence economies that were either held together by strong family ties or survived on money sent home by family members working abroad.

But there were also wide disparities in how people described their country's situation and in their visions for the future. These disparities were largely based on national stereotypes, according to Nordström:

"I felt that many of the stereotypes I was treated to before the trip showed up again in the description of the future: Azerbaijan as a sultanic petrostate, Georgia as wild and ungovernable, Armenia as ancient and tragic."

There are significant differences between the three countries, which stem partially from historical causes and partially from the prevailing political situation. Local traditions, minority issues, intergenerational social conflicts, and relations to surrounding countries and the rest of the world also play a part, of course.

## AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan stood out as hypermodern, globalized, and yet archaically governed:

"The first thing that struck me when I got to Baku was the presence of petro-wealth. Hypermodern buildings rose up like stranded spaceships here and there around Baku, bringing to mind the rapidly growing cities of China and the petrostates in the Persian Gulf. This says something about the future that Azerbaijan imagines is coming soon."

Still, many older buildings and tourist attractions are built in a style designed to trigger associations with Islam and the Orient. In conversations with Azerbaijanis, Nordström discerned a need to contrast the historical and colonial legacy with the image of the country as modern and secular.

"When people talked about Azerbaijan's glory days, they were talking about the oil boom of the late

19<sup>th</sup> century when the oil industry in Baku was competing with US oil fields to be the center of the global oil industry."

Baku can thus be seen as the cradle of the modern, global petroleum-based economy, and modern Azerbaijan is hoping for a resurrection of its greatness after an era of Soviet partitioning from the global economy and transfer of oil revenues to Moscow. In this sense, Azerbaijan can also be seen as a leading power in the modernization of the Muslim world. Today's Azerbaijan has the same national symbols as the short-lived independent republic of 1918–1920, the first democratic state in the Muslim world, with female suffrage and religious freedom, and it is this tradition people say they want to build upon.

"The more controversial aspect of the current modernization is that it is so strongly connected to the Aliyev family. Azerbaijan as the personal property of the Aliyev family was a recurring theme – a total privatization of the state.

"The country was characterized as a feudal society where the family doles out regional monopolies as fiefs to local bigwigs. The president's role in this shadow system is to resolve disputes and balance the interests of the powerful. For this reason, the president's authority cannot be questioned."

Nordström interjects that this is sometimes reminiscent of the cult of Atatürk in Turkey.

"Everywhere, you see portraits, statues, monuments, and writings that pay homage to former president Heydar Aliyev, the current president's father."

The tacit acceptance created a pervasive sense that the family's power over Azerbaijan had become consolidated and that this stability was universally desired by the country's nearest neighbors, as well as by Europe and the US. There was omnipresent anxiety about what might happen if someone were to become an enemy of the regime, anxiety that has paralyzed political life and created a civil society oriented towards survival rather than bringing about change.

## GEORGIA

Compared to Azerbaijan, Georgia seemed much more politically open – open to inspection and open to unexpected change. A common opinion was that Georgian culture embraces an appreciation of the untamed and crazy, as well as the intrinsic value of independence. It was exactly that which gave Georgians the courage to take on the impossible, such as effectively fighting inveterate corruption.

Georgia is proud to have become the World Bank's poster child for anti-corruption. After the Rose Revolution of 2003, the entire police force was fired and only those who passed stringent physical standards





**AZERBAIJAN:** 1 The Flame Towers viewed from the old town of Baku. At night 10,000 LED lamps light up the façade of the 190-meter-tall building. 2 The "Oriental room" in the Oil Club at the Nobel brothers' Villa Petrolea in Baku. 3-4 The personality cult of Heydar Aliyev is present everywhere in Baku.



an entirely open question. Or as one of the Georgians I met put it: 'We are going to have sexy elections this year.'

## ARMENIA

**The last country you visited on your trip was Armenia. How did Armenia differ from Azerbaijan and Georgia?**

"When I arrived in Armenia, there was also an election in progress, but without the overwrought atmosphere of Tbilisi. In general, Yerevan seemed calmer than the choleric capital of Georgia. Along the lines of the Georgian fight against corruption, the Armenians had successfully combated the formerly anarchistic traffic culture: cars now stopped for pedestrians and people wore their seatbelts. But you could also see a new-found anger and weariness of the entrenched political situation among the younger generation."

The big symbolic action, Nordström argues, was the occupation of a park in central Yerevan in protest of how the rich and powerful oligarchs set themselves above the law. The rhetoric in these protests was inspired by the global Occupy Movement and was more anti-capitalist than nationalist.

"The criticism among the young and well-educated was aimed at the distortions created by the economic inequalities. In contrast to the traditional nationalist emphasis on history, their focus was on being able to live a normal life like others of their generation in the rest of the world today. 'I care about Everest as much as I care about Ararat', said one of the activists, referring to the vain longing for what is for many Arme-

were rehired. The consequence was an efficient and loyal police force with a good reputation, Nordström explains.

The emphasis on openness and transparency in dealings with the public can be seen in the architecture of the police headquarters. The entire building is glass, and thus transparent. The strong self-image is also clear in relation to the country's European ambitions.

### Do Georgians see themselves as part of Europe?

"The Georgians regard themselves unquestionably as a part of Europe, but the government remains critical of the regulations on the European common market. Singapore was described as the role model and the economic objective was to globalize, rather than Europeanize. But given Georgia's position, Europe was the only option."

Critics of the government believed the extreme neoliberal economic policy was counter-productive if integration with the West was in fact the goal. Nordström says:

"The absence of regulations actually scared away European and American investors. The latter did not consider the unregulated situation sustainable, and it instead attracted the interest of Chinese and Russian investors with a shorter time horizon."

### What is the situation today?

"I arrived in the middle of the political prelude to the autumn parliamentary election, which is in turn the prelude to the presidential election in 2013. What generated the excitement was that the richest man in

Georgia, Bidzina Ivanishvili, had withdrawn his support from the government and changed directions from philanthropy to political action. He now openly challenged Saakashvili and had formed an opposition alliance called "the Georgian Dream". Ivanishvili was already an unmistakable presence in Tbilisi, where his house dominated the city landscape like an eagle's nest taken straight out of a James Bond film, overlooking the government building."

The establishment of a stronger government machine was a side effect of the Rose Revolution and the Georgian government's anti-corruption initiatives. Efficiency has also been the operative word in relation to reforming the legal system. This has, according to Nordström, led to lopsidedness in the legal system in favor of the prosecution. Most legal proceedings are determined outside the courtroom and the position of judges and defense attorneys has been undermined. The opposition claims this government machine is being used to crack down on opponents of the sitting government. The opposition's take on the situation is that this is a sign that corruption has not been eradicated, but only moved upwards in the system.

"In general, the mood in the run-up to the elections was agitated. The pundits I spoke with said that Georgian politics is shaped by a revolutionary mindset. The government styles itself as revolutionaries and its opponents as counter-revolutionaries. The opposition, meanwhile, describe themselves as the true revolutionaries up against a government blinded by power. I noticed that neither side was eager to discuss how they would act in a situation where they did not win as big as they hoped. The political future of Georgia is

**Both government and opposition regard themselves as revolutionary. Reaction must then be – subversive.**





4.



5.

**GEORGIA: 1–2** Producers in the town of Signaghi, a UNESCO world heritage site, see a future in the world market for organic wine. **3** The transparent police headquarters. **4** Tbilisi's Holy Trinity Cathedral is the third-tallest Orthodox Cathedral in the world. Bidzina Ivanishvili funded its construction before he went into politics. **5** Houses in Tbilisi.



1.



2.



3.



4.

**ARMENIA: 1** An old sports palace and minibuses gives a post-Soviet feeling to downtown Yerevan. **2** The use of billboards in the election campaign in Armenia was strictly regulated. **3** The Cascade, commemorating 50 years of Soviet rule. Now, privatized and under renovation. **4** Occupiers in the Mashtots Park, "This City Belongs to Us".

nians the virtually sacred Mount Ararat on the other side of the Turkish border.

"The pervasive tone was otherwise mildly fatalistic. The situation for Armenians was disastrous and always had been. The memory of the genocide against Armenians during World War I is part of that. This fatalism is exacerbated by a steadily declining and emigrating population, deindustrialization, natural disasters, and war since independence."

Unlike Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenia is home to a fondness for the Soviet era and nostalgia for Russia as the historic protectors of the Armenians against the Turks.

#### How was that manifest?

"Well, you could see it for example in what their uniforms looked like and in the Soviet monuments they were still building", Nordström says.

The ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan on the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the occupation of a large swath of the neighboring country has a paralyzing effect on both domestic and foreign policy. The pundits argued that despite this, there was no willingness to compromise in Armenian society and that in light of an increasingly stronger and more rhetorically aggressive Azerbaijan that can afford to spend as much on its military as the entire government budget of Armenia, the situation was worrisome. The hope was that the precarious situation would force the institution of reforms, but there was a consensus of distrust in the politicians and businessmen who controlled the country, as well as the only opposition on offer. It was as if society itself had carefully closed the roads to change, Nordström says.

## GEOPOLITICAL DEADLOCKS — COSMOPOLITAN FUTURE

**Was there anything that particularly struck you during this informal field study? Were there any main issues or recurring themes in the discussions?**

"What was obvious in the three countries was that the economy is globalized, but politics has not kept up, having instead become mired in territorial conflicts that paralyze and divert political energy. The national stereotypes are still useful for defining enemies and friends, justifying actions, and explaining phenomena, but not for describing visions for the future."

Visions for the future are instead found beyond the realm of the national, in the globalized or cosmopolitan, among transnational, super-rich oligarchs with multiple citizenship, but also among the well-educated, and Internet users. People are finding their own paths to global economic flows, either by migrating to the flows or by trying to control strategic points for the flows. To be in the flow is to be successful. Outsiders have nothing to offer. Their labor is not useful and their voices can be bought cheaply, or manipulated.

"Why these injustices could not be mobilized into political fury was a recurring question. The explanation often given was that politics was a dangerous business and people who get involved – and their families – risk losing their jobs or their health. Much political activism is aimed at creating conditions that make politics possible – but also at exerting influence through direct action.

"In many ways, the situation and the discussions

reminded me of what you might experience in Europe or anywhere else in the world, only in a much more extreme version. The young, well-educated, and linguistically talented in particular expressed frustration at the privileged position of the super-rich and how this spilled over into the rest of society and undermined ambitions to work hard and do the right thing."

The most ambivalent attitude Anders Nordström encountered was in Azerbaijan.

"It was a mix of pride in economic progress since independence and worry about a lack of alternative futures.

"The attitude communicated in Georgia was pride and self-confidence, fearlessness, 'it's all up to us now, we will do what we want', a sometimes slightly naive belief that the future can be absolutely anything, and that the country can start over from the beginning.

"I recognized the Armenian attitude as the most post-Soviet, but perhaps also the most realistic, in that there was no expectation of radical change. Or as one Armenian summed up the situation: 'It will probably go wrong this time, too; you should never underestimate the stupidity of our politicians'. This is an acknowledgement of a partially self-inflicted, paralyzing stagnation where the future is in the hands of us poor, inadequate people; something felt these days in connection with the entire European project." ✕

**ninna mörner**

Editor of Baltic Worlds.

Note: See BW's election coverage at [www.balticworlds.com](http://www.balticworlds.com). Anders Nordström comments on the outcome of the elections in Armenia, and there is also an analysis of the election results in Georgia.

**Nostalgia is a way of coping with defeat. Victors make the victory the object of their own nostalgia.**



## Dangerous games. When official religious doctrines provoke

**T**he last refuge of a government ideologue unable to offer a realistic program for development is religion. The consequences of playing the religion card are unpredictable.

Dmitri Medvedev, then president of the Russian Federation, refused to release the members of the punk group Pussy Riot. On April 26 2012, speaking to representatives of five TV channels, the president, for the first time in months, voiced his opinion on a topic that had Russian society even more drastically divided than the discussion of pre-election programs. “As a devout Christian” – a rare admission – Dmitri Anatolievich (Medvedev) remarked that “the young ladies got what they wanted: popularity”.

The three members of the feminist punk group were arrested in late February and were supposed to remain in custody until the end of June. When asked whether the young ladies were so dangerous to society that they deserved to be put behind bars for such a long time, Mr. Medvedev responded by pointing out that it was not possible for him to interfere with the decision of the court. Thus, the case of Pussy Riot advanced to the next stage; it also signaled to observers the government’s stand on recent questionable actions of some church officials. It is evident and not surprising that the liberal segment of Russian society was disappointed with, among other things, Medvedev’s evaluation of the situation, as it was with his statement about freedom of speech: once again, the president mentioned the absence of censorship and different priorities set by government-sponsored TV channels on the one hand versus the Internet on the other.

**BUT LET US** get back to the religion question, or, to be more precise, to the use of religious symbols, which became an inseparable part of the political discourse – increasingly so with the inauguration of the new/old president, Putin, fast approaching. Let us be clear: these issues have never played such an important role in the country’s history. Reports about the highest-ranking government officials visiting monasteries and cathedrals on religious holidays have become an integral part of protocol; meetings with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church and leaders of other denominations officially recog-

nized in the country are now an almost daily ritual. We are already used to the fact that during the stormy pre-election campaign or before unpopular decisions on vital issues were made – especially reductions in social services or increases in the cost of utilities – society’s attention was deliberately distracted by such seemingly “burning” issues as whether to allow polygamy, to ban abortions, and so on. People threw themselves with great agitation into the discussion about polygamy, forgetting completely about increases in the cost of electricity and water. Such “vital” topics would then be laid to rest for a while until the beginning of a new campaign. We have already gone through that.

**WHAT TRANSPIRED** last winter, however, appeared unprecedented. Let us recall just one event which paralyzed the city of Moscow for several days: the adoration of the girdle from the robe of Mary in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in the center of Moscow. It was a well-organized event and was craftily advertised immediately before the parliamentary elections. Elderly women prayed for their families and health as well as for the head of the Russian Orthodox Church and for the ruling political party, which oversaw the arrival of the sacred item from Athos. At the time, no one took notice of the fact that a Greek official who helped strike the deal was later imprisoned for fraud. In the melee of the moment – about a thousand people ended up in the hospital after waiting in line for hours – few citizens noticed the media reports of the shameless sale of spots in the queue for a pretty penny, and stories of officials holding VIP passes. People could have read in several media publications about our own fragment of the same girdle from the robe of Mary, which was given to Russia more than a hundred years ago by grateful monks from Athos after the Shipka battle. It has always been displayed in an old church just a few steps from the agitated crowd. Yet there was no line for that.

In all honesty, I cannot think that the number of true believers has multiplied significantly since my younger days, when religion was, to say the least, not “in”. I recall the Komsomol (Union of Young Communists) leaders bullying their classmates who dared to attend a church or synagogue. Nowadays, many

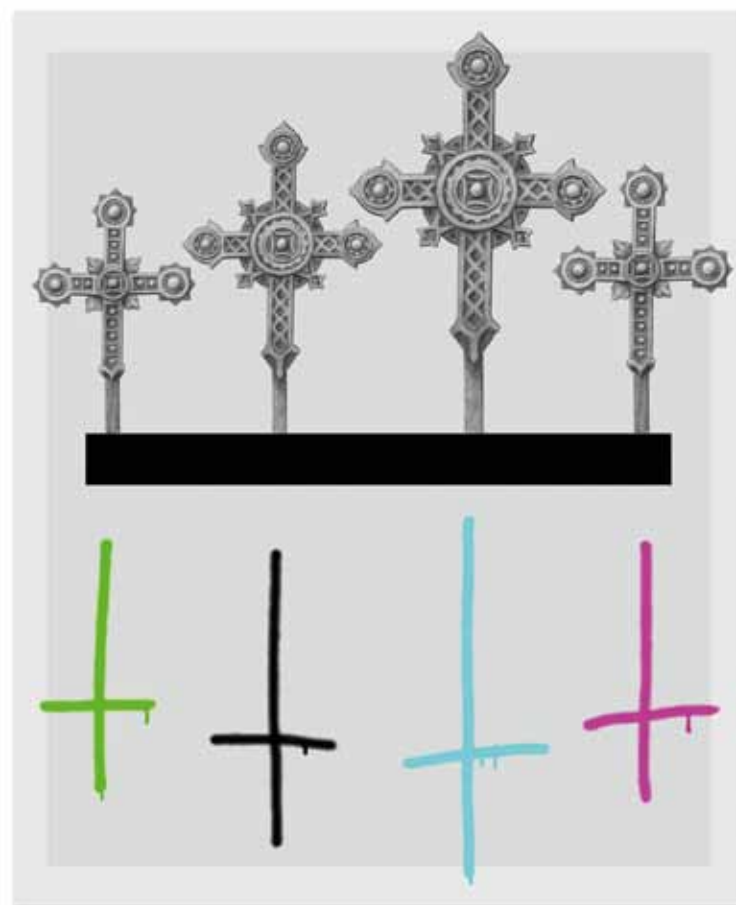


Illustration: Karin Sunvisson

of those same officials can be seen hugging and kissing the reverend fathers on camera. Faith, in general, is an intimate matter. It is hard to imagine a true believer of any denomination drooling with cruel anticipation at the brutal execution of a fellow human being, whether innocent or guilty. Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike have written about it in their blogs when commenting on the Ku Klux Klan-style campaign being waged against the three young women, members of the little-known feminist punk rock band Pussy Riot, who, on February 21, staged a performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, during which they asked the Virgin Mary in prayer to rid the country of Putin and Kirill, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.

**THERE IS NOW** no doubt that the subsequent arrest of the members of Pussy Riot and the disproportionately severe punishment they had to face were the

result of their having mentioned the above two individuals, and were meant to discourage others from doing the same. The message was crystal clear to all. The result, however, was unexpected. In addition to the mass demonstrations calling for violence against the “perpetrators of sacrilege”, the incident gave rise to a protest movement. More and more people became infuriated with the government’s actions, as well as those of the church. The scandal – unworthy of a person who has taken a vow – surrounding the Primate’s property, be it his costly Breguet watch or his home in an elite housing complex (where he ruined a neighbor, himself a clergyman), merely added fuel to the fire. With increasing frequency, believers and even some church officials have been asking unpleasant questions online and in the media, thus demonstrating the absence of unity among them. Some Russian Orthodox clergy do not share the Patriarch’s opinion about the

fate of the punk group members and his harsh judgment of their actions.

An ambitious public prayer service to protect the faith and the desecrated relics took place in that same Cathedral of Christ the Savior the following Sunday. Its goal was to counteract this “information attack” as well as the “wiles of the devil” against the Russian Orthodox Church and its head. (The ones helping the devil were obviously the members of the punk group and their supporters.) Security for the 65,000 believers brought in from all over the country was provided by 1,500 riot police. In their interviews, organizers and participants in the action minced no words. They cursed the punk group members, emancipated women, females in general, and anyone who dared to desecrate the church and the authorities. “The Orthodox religion is the basis of Russia’s ethnic identity.” This was the statement broadcast to the whole world. Watching the television reports, I could hardly recognize the country I had grown up in and still live in. And I was not the only one who had such feelings.

**THE VERY NEXT DAY**, it was obvious from blogs that, with the public prayer meeting and propaganda, the autocratic Orthodox Church authorities had gone overboard. The Internet was overflowing with statements to the effect that the worst enemies of faith in Russia are not the likes of the Pussy Riot performers or atheists, but rather the clergy who were taking it upon themselves to fill the current vacuum and become a substitute for the ideological department of the former Soviet Central Committee of the Communist Party. Orthodox journalists openly denounced incitement to hatred in the country. But the process had already begun. On March 24, in an interview on REN TV, a Moscow lawyer of Chechen origin, Daguir Khasavov, stated that if Muslims in the capital were not tried in accordance with Sharia law courts, he would “drown the city in blood”. The Internet exploded: government-sponsored media published comments by the spiritual leader of Russian Muslims and the spokesman for Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, in which Khasavov’s statement was branded a “provocation”. The Office of the Public Prosecutor cited the TV channel for incitement to extremism. At the same time, Vsevolod Chaplin, Chairman

of the Synod Department for Public Relations, expressed his support for Khasavov and was branded an extremist himself on the Internet. Mr. Chaplin, by the way, is a well-known proponent of a mandatory religious dress code and other medieval practices.

It is safe to say that the attempt to unite society around the traditional totalitarian-theocratic model has failed utterly. Instead, it made evident the growing polarization of the population and the inability of the authorities to formulate a truly attractive vision for the country. It is disconcerting to think that dangerous games on the field of denominational and ethnic issues can pose a threat to our common future.

**KHASAVOV WAS FORCED** to make a quick exit from the country. The three members of Pussy Riot, Maria Alyokhina, Yekaterina Samutsevich, and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, were still held in prison. A news anchor from NTV reported that Vladimir Putin, immediately following his inauguration ceremony, met with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church for a talk and, possibly, for parting wishes. At the same time, believers demanded that Kirill Serebrennikov’s new production of the “Golden Cock-erel” performance be removed from the Bolshoi Theater repertoire because they regard it as an insult to Orthodox religious people.

Apparently, the real “performance” is yet to come. ❌

**nadezhda azhgikhina**

Note: This article was written in the summer of 2012.

## Class as crucible. Analysis of social differentiation

**Any judgment about the relative importance of class and status factors and about the role of market processes per se in the life chances of individuals may be difficult to make [...] it is essential that it is attempted.**

Joan Scott, 1994

In September 2011, Tony Wood – the author of *Chechnya: The Case for Independence* – visited the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES) at Södertörn University (see *Baltic Worlds* vol. IV:2; 2011). At the end of his sojourn he held a well-attended seminar at CBEES and presented a paper of which I was the principal commentator. Seven months later a revised and updated version of the article entitled “Collapse as Crucible: The Reforging of Russian Society” was published in the March/April issue of the *New Left Review* (vol. 74; 2012), presenting Russia on its cover as “The Iceberg Society”, an allusion to a famous remark by Moshe Lewin on the Soviet society of the 1920–1930s as the “quicksand society”. The CBEES seminar was a lively event, with many interventions and questions duly acknowledged in the first footnote of the published article. Below are some of my remarks from this occasion reworked after the release of Wood’s article.

**DRAWING ON** the recent protest mobilization in Russia and Western press assertions of the arrival of the urban middle class that would put an end to the era of unaccountability and corruption in the country, Wood asks a simple question: *Why was there no such open and mass resistance movement since 1991?* The question is not so much about whether the levels of inequality, social injustice, and exploitation have reached the point that can no longer be tolerated, but rather about where these people came from who make claims determining what country they want to live in. The author sees the origins of the perverse “stability” of the Putin era in the persistence of “the old”, the “social consciousness of the Communist era”, which disfigures economic and political structures and, more importantly, permeates social relations, concealing the levels of inequality and preventing different parts of the population from realizing their potential mutual interests and mobilizing for collective action.

The article focuses specifically on how transformation of the means of production and productive relations, conditions for access to property and power, military conflicts and global economic disruptions transformed the system of social differentiation in the country in the period from the October Revolution to the events on Sakharov Avenue. Wood begins with a rather conventional argument that the peculiarities of the post-Soviet Russian society with regard to social, political, and economic organization are a result of the norms and practices inherited from the previous epoch. The major original contribution of the author’s eloquent discussion is the conclusion that the past is not simply responsible “for the deformities of Russian capitalism today”; more importantly, “it is [...] the persistence of the old that has underwritten the stability of the new”.

**WOOD STATES THAT** “the rulers”<sup>1</sup> of the Communist era, the *nomenklatura*, although not explicitly distinguished as a class of their own, were not only autonomous in relation to the working class (its own base), but had a monopoly on political representation and economic resources. It is precisely this dual mode of domination of the elites that survived the dissolution of the old regime and became the foundation for the new one, in many ways so similar to its predecessor. Wood follows how the political power got quickly converted into property, allowing the oligarchs to accumulate assets that are especially striking when the levels of poverty and deprivation are juxtaposed with them. The author finds a new name for the current political and economic regime in Russia that captures its historical continuity and change, namely the “neo-authoritarian recentralization”.

“The subordinate classes” – peasants and workers, distinguished by Wood into several categories based on skill and income levels – were fragmented by virtue of their economic and social dependency on the enterprise and its management: employees were tied to their employers by a system of social provisions, and inequalities within the strata were justified by variation between economy sectors. In the 1990s, many of them were faced with regular payment arrears, thrown into unemployment, or forced into precarious employment patterns and double



shifts. A mobilization and demand for social representation is impossible due to the lack of independent trade unions and a misguided interpretation of social reality, in which many were encouraged to think of themselves as still the “leading class”, although this time under the name of the “middle” class.

Wood also identifies the social base of the recent protests among the successors of the perestroika-era intelligentsia, the top “layer” of the working class that still does not exactly fit the poster image of the middle class. This group is small and its main characteristics are defined as “urban, highly educated and broadly liberal”, i.e. people whose main gain in the process of transformation was knowledge, access to information and some economic independence. It might broaden and gain more strength as the deepening economic crisis increases social problems, which the current system “is not built to even address”. However, today, the obscurity of the scope of actual inequalities in the consciousness of the people, the persistent lack of accountability of the elites, and the limited and uneven economic modernization across the country allow the author to conclude that two socio-economic systems, and therefore multiple schemas of social identity and forms of lived experience, co-exist, blurring some of the outcomes of the extreme social polarization in Russia. Only with the departure of people who carry the memory of the USSR among the ranks of “the subordinated” will the inertial social base for stability fade away.

**MY STARTING POINT** for the discussion at the seminar was Wood’s emphasis that widely spread mistrust toward class as a theoretical category suitable for understanding social phenomena presents one of the major challenges in working with class analysis. I argue that the lack of a consensual theoretical and methodological approach to operationalizing class is another equally important challenge, which more often leads class analysis to ad hoc historical interpretations than to fruitful theoretical constructs. The author is very careful not to speak of social stratification in Russia but cannot avoid mentioning intersections with gender and ethnicity, and his overall theoretical approach is somewhat eclectic. Claiming no adherence to any established school of thought, Wood uses a Weberian ap-

proach to categorization of social differentiation based on occupation and skill level at several points in the text. At once point, he also refers to one of the Russian classics, Ovsei Shkaratan, and later even finds it useful to employ some of Bourdieu’s analytical tools. However, the author’s problem formulation and the conclusions are essentially Marxist: he establishes the relational character of the category “class” and argues that without a realization of the actual levels of social polarization and mechanisms behind it, without a transformation of consciousness of those from the subordinate classes, no significant social conflict is to be expected. Nonetheless, it is surprising that Wood does not explicitly identify himself with this school of thought.

One of the things that might strengthen the central argument of the article even further is a richer empirical presentation of the “parallelism of social structures”. While the presentation of the process of transformation is very detailed, the account of its structural outcomes “in the realm of consciousness and in material reality” does not extend beyond the discussion of the middle class. Moreover, it is possible to suggest that the outlined parallelism is supported and reinforced by the rulers as a means of maintaining the stability that puzzled the author in the first place. The elites inherited not only economic and political means of domination; they have also acquired the means of ideological control. Wood

emphasizes how the powerless do class – they deny it through consumption (of old and new patterns). There is a need, however, for further discussion of the role of the powerful in supporting this way of staging social inequalities, the imagined class relations that are imposed on every sphere of daily life.

**WOOD’S ANALYSIS** is especially important today, amid a wave of mass protest movements around the world, as it brings forward the issues of deeply concealed social inequalities that extend beyond the problems of corruption in governance or violation of election procedures. As the proposed “iceberg” metaphor suggests, the celebrated triumph of political and economic liberalism of the 1990s might have brought some economic growth to Russia, but in the pseudodemocratic context, uneven distribution of wealth became built into the system of political relations. Kurt Andersen, writing for *Time* magazine on the protest actions around the globe in 2011, finds that protesters are after a new social contract. Thus, even if the old ideological confrontations between liberalism and communism have become obsolete, true democracy is unreachable without social justice.

It is also Andersen who claims that the only explanation protest sociology has to offer is that protest arises when expectations that a share of rising prosperity will be received are not fulfilled. Indeed, Giddens’s leading theoretical paradigm had asserted the breaking

down of traditional constraints of collectivities, and increased reflexivity, or cognitive consciousness, which manifests itself in the use of modern social media as one of the key instruments of mobilization instead of traditional organizational forms. The recent events can be seen as a part of the contestation of individual statuses, with regard to access to economic and political resources, by protesters who want to realize their rights and aspirations. However, another stream of sociological theory of modernity – that of Ulrich Beck, discussed by Woodman – suggests that the individual is not simply emancipated from norms embedded in the collectively constructed institutions, but is subsequently subjected to a set of regulations and boundaries which are re-embedded at the level of people in the singular. As a result, individuals are not completely free to realize their preferences, nor are they completely free to choose their life pursuits. Wood’s article is an important contribution to the discussion about the origins of social conflict, as it attempts to place the potential protesters within the structure of social relations and hierarchies, actual and imagined. ✖

**zhanna kravchenko**

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- 1 In the article, the official Soviet view on social differentiation is used as a starting point for class categorization. It is criticized and nuanced as the discussion unfolds, but Wood does not develop a categorization of his own. The dichotomy “the rulers/the subordinate classes” is mine, and is used for the sake of simplifying the review only.

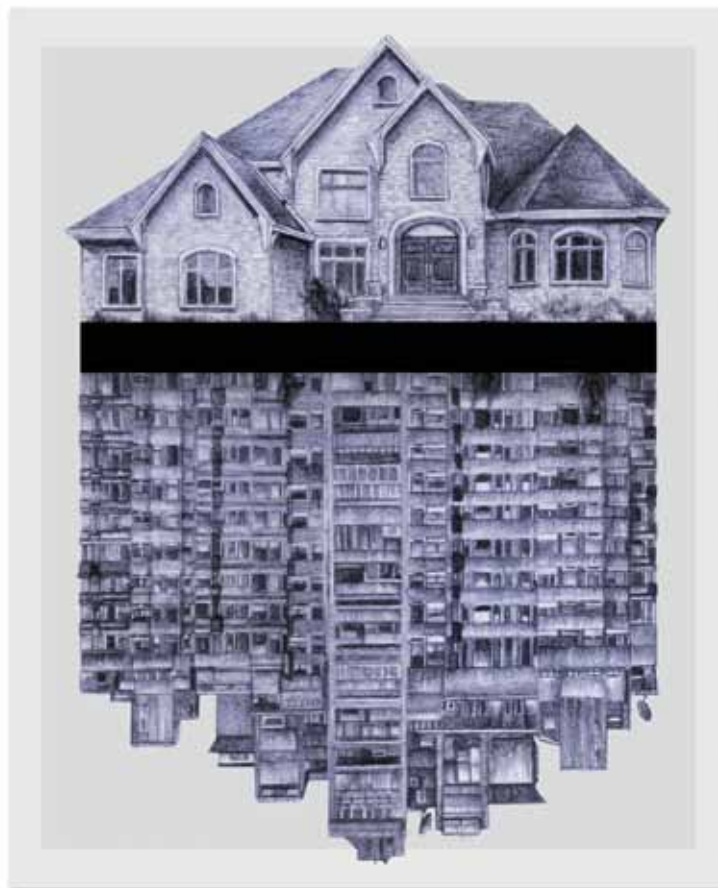


Illustration: Karin Sunvisson

## An asymmetric affair. West and East German academia during reunification

**T**his is a report about a deep break in recent academic, social, and political history: the abrupt end of the academic system of East Germany (officially the German Democratic Republic, GDR) and its partial integration in the emerging system of a unified Germany, which was basically an extension of West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany, FRG) to the East. This change has been controversial, and its interpretation still is. At the end of this report I will touch upon these controversies. First, I want to tell what happened.

In the early 1990s, the roughly fifteen East German universities were fundamentally restructured. None was discontinued, two new ones emerged. Many East German research institutes outside the universities – mostly under the aegis of the huge Academy of Sciences of the GDR – were discontinued. Those which survived were restructured and placed in new institutional contexts. Some new institutes were founded. The legal structure was changed; basically West German law was introduced in the East.

The personnel employed in East German academic and research institutions were reduced. University staff was cut by about 30 percent. Those dismissed were mainly below the professorial level, including both academic and non-academic staff. A new personnel structure was introduced that included many non-tenured positions, most of which had been absent in the East German system before. West German academics moved into newly defined positions in East German institutions, especially in the higher ranks. By 1995, 43 percent of the professors in East German universities had come in from the West. The percentage was much higher in the humanities and the social sciences than in the natural sciences, the life sciences, and engineering. Many East German academics lost their jobs, went into early retirement, changed to new positions inside and outside academia, had to readjust, or suffered interruptions of their careers. At the same time, some East Germans started to develop careers which they had been prevented from pursuing in previous years, often by the political system. Many East Germans, particularly young ones, quickly learned to make good use of the new intellectual and professional opportunities in Germany and abroad.

As far as the cognitive substance of the break is concerned, it is hard to generalize. Disciplines strongly differed from one another. Clearly, some specializations disappeared, like the science of Marxism-Leninism. In the GDR, resources, freedom of teaching and studying, and access to international debates had been severely restricted. In these respects there was now much progress. Liberation, broadening of horizons, and diversification took place. Lots of West German resources were pouring into the East: money, stipends, equipment, know-how, practices of communication, procedures. Still, the scientific substance seems to have changed much less, less rapidly and less thoroughly, than the institutional set-up and the personnel.

**IN ITS COMPREHENSIVE** scope, its radical thoroughness, and its remarkable speed, this was a change which had no precedent in German history. It was much more comprehensive, radical, and speedy than the changes occurring in the other East Central and East European countries which also emerged from communism in those years. After all, it was only in Germany that the departure from communism took the form of the unification of two states.

While the East German system had to undergo this fundamental change, the West German system hardly changed at all. In fact, its status quo was confirmed and reinforced by the fact that its basic principles were exported to the newly acquired East, which without a doubt had proved to be less effective, less democratic, less pluralistic, and less innovative than what had been achieved in the West. The collapse of the defeated East confirmed the status quo of the victorious West. In fact, some of the reforms under way in the West in the late 1980s were slowed down and postponed in those years in which unification took place on West German terms – absorbing resources, attention, and political energies.

**MUCH COULD BE SAID** about the procedures and mechanisms of initiating and implementing this change. I must concentrate my remarks here on three points.

I. Clearly, fundamental decisions were made under West German dominance on the *political* level. For example, the

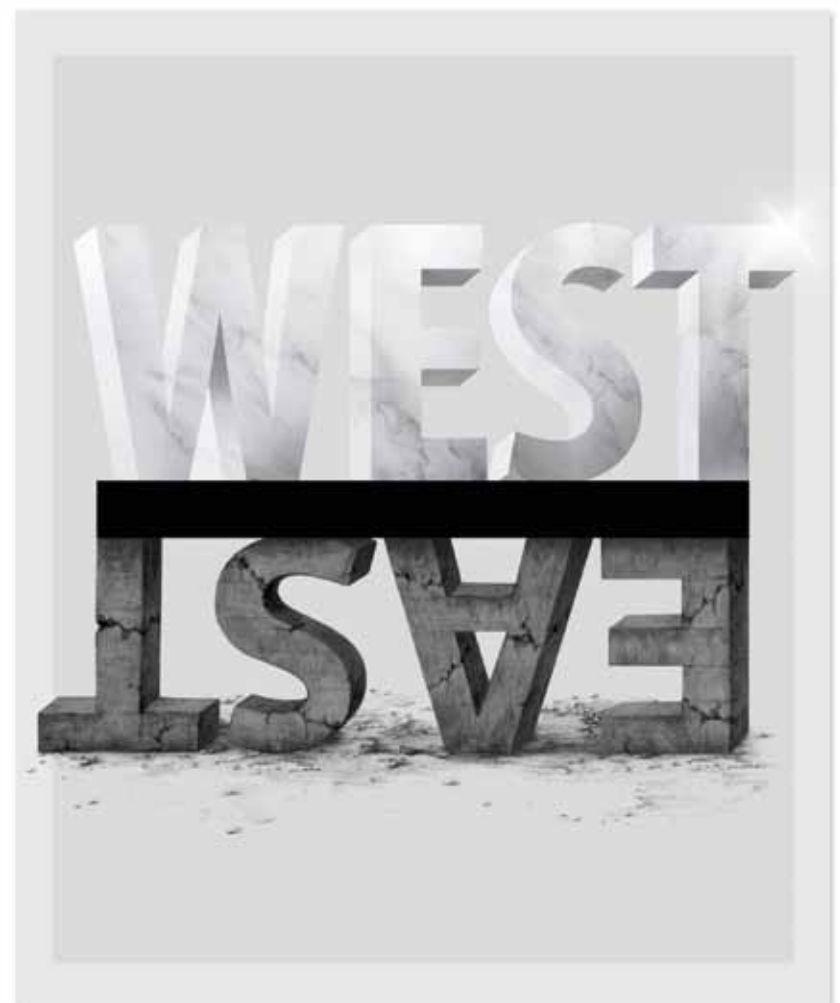
decision that one integrated German system was to be implemented as quickly as possible by basically extending the West German model to the East – instead of living with two different academic systems under one constitutional roof for some years for example, or replacing both the Eastern and the Western system by something new, to be jointly negotiated between East and West. These were major political decisions.

But in more specific decisions, such as those concerning individual institutions, disciplines, projects, and recruitment processes, the role of academics was strong and influential. The overall process was not merely decreed from above. A lot of academic self-administration went on. One indicator was the strong role played by evaluation, peer evaluation. Peer evaluation? Well, mostly the evaluation was performed by West German scientists, scholars, and experts, supplemented by some from East Germany and some from abroad, usually from Western countries. Evalu-

ation took place according to Western standards and within the scope defined by the fundamental political decisions. Still, it was a serious evaluation on a tremendous scale.

II. What happened was not a centralized, streamlined, coherently planned action, but a process with many actors who were not fully coordinated. The united Germany would be a federal political system, dividing power between the central government and the *Länder*, the individual states. Universities were controlled by the states, and the political texture of state governments varied. While the evaluation and reconstruction of the universities were under the control of the single states, the evaluation, dissolution, and restructuring of the research institutes outside the universities were controlled by federal institutions and bodies.

III. Laying off and replacing staff, reshuffling them and recruiting new people was the most controversial, most sen-





sitive, most painful part of the whole process. There were many losers and many winners, unequally distributed between West and East. It is here that major injustices occurred, life courses were changed, careers damaged or given new opportunities, all in the course of processes with a high degree of competition, limited transparency, political and personal biases, and very imperfect knowledge. Many of those who had been active and influential in the East German system now lost their jobs as a consequence of political screening and purging. More often, the change of personnel was achieved through another mechanism: the institutions were thoroughly restructured, positions and their requirements were redefined, and when they were advertised, the former incumbents from the East and new competitors, many of them from the West, applied. Competitive hiring processes took place under the criteria and the rules of the newly established system. In this process, many Western competitors turned out to be better prepared and qualified than many from the East, who had been raised and trained and had practiced in a different system.

**BUT ANOTHER IMPORTANT** point should be observed which is frequently overlooked. The decisions, gains, and losses in these processes of displacement, recruitment, and restructuring were not only determined by the asymmetry between powerful Westerners and dependent Easterners. Conflicts between Easterners and Easterners also played an important role. East Germany had been a dictatorship. Recruitment processes had been highly politicized. Politics and ideology had pervaded the academic system. There had been many losers. They now had the opportunity to speak out, sometimes after having contributed much to bringing down the old system as dissident activists in the non-violent revolution which took place on the streets of East German cities in 1989/1990. They were very critical of the old system and not at all generous when it came to the question whether figures of the old establishment should continue to work in leading positions under the new system. The mostly young speakers of the non-establishment people, many of them victims of the now collapsing dictatorship, spoke out in favor of more radical change. They

deplored the fact that not enough of the old elites were replaced in the early 1990s. This was an influence in the overall process of change.

**FINALLY, FOUR POINTS** that were controversial then are still controversial today.

I. Could the whole reorganization have been accomplished with a lesser human cost and with less asymmetry and inequality between West and East? To a limited extent, I believe it could have been. There were some endogenous attempts to reform East German institutions in the late 1980s and in 1990. I am skeptical about their real strength, but they should have been given a chance. There should have been more time, less rigidity, more willingness to experiment.

II. What happened was basically the extension of the West German system to the East. This was the pattern of German reunification in general, and it was the pattern in the academic sphere as well. But the West German academic system itself was not without weaknesses and deficits. It was not the best conceivable model in the world by any means. Could the moment of unification have been used to put through basic reforms, not only on the East German, but also on the West German side? Demands for such comprehensive changes were raised in those years. Could we in the West, for the sake of this aim, have learned more from the East, and should we have incorporated more from the East into the emerging unified system? There were voices in support of such strategies.

Even in retrospect, however, it is not at all clear *what* from the East German system could and should have been preserved to make the outcome as a whole different and better. We must not forget that it took tremendous resources and energy to restructure the East. Were there resources and energy left to restructure the West as well? I have mentioned the political and psychological situation of the early 1990s, which made the West overconfident in its strength and little inclined to dwell on its own weaknesses in order to remedy them.

Still, the issue continues to warrant debate: Could and should the moment not have been used to build a new and better united Germany, instead of implementing a process in which the East would catch up with the West, even though the West was far from perfect?

III. It is now possible to judge some long-term results. First of all, and most importantly, in the East – that is, in the territory that was formerly the GDR and is now the Eastern part of unified Germany – there has been tremendous improvement in the institutional conditions, resources, quality, and results of research and higher education. This is true although the top academic institutions, the best departments, and the most outstanding scholars and scientists, with few exceptions, are still found in the West (at some but not all Western institutions, to be exact). And this point is significant even though German universities are never among the top ten in international ratings. They are under-represented among the top hundred, but strongly represented among the top 500.

In some respects the proclaimed and intended aims have not been reached. The *Wissenschaftler-Integrations-Programm*, WIP, is an example. It was a program which was concerned with scientists whose non-university institutes had been discontinued, and was aimed at finding them jobs in universities. This program was a glaring failure.

On the other hand, there were also unintended consequences that are still with us today. The decisions of 1990 have led to more non-university research institutes, which, on the whole, now make up a higher proportion of scientific institutions and are stronger and better organized than they had been before in the West. In this sense, the universities have not been the winners, but the relative losers of reunification. The structural difference between universities and non-university research institutions has also been reinforced. Many people see this as a structural problem. Another result is that systematic evaluations, which were undertaken en masse in the process of reunification, have become common and institutionalized, and have stayed with us ever since. This is an unintended but positive result of the process.

IV. Some major problems of today were neither anticipated nor addressed in the early 1990s. Europeanization and globalization were much less of a challenge twenty years ago. The aim then was to achieve more homogeneity within the system, especially between West and East. In the meantime, major steps have been taken not only to recognize, but also to accentuate and strengthen

the differentiations within our system of research and higher education. Major challenges of today were not anticipated in the early 1990s, yet the system established then for Germany as a whole is able to deal with new challenges. It has major problems, but it is capable of learning. ✕

jürgen kocka

Note: This presentation was given at a seminar on reunification and its consequences for German universities at the Uppsala Centre for Russia and Eurasian Studies (UCRS), October 1, 2012.

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# Inflationary use of a political concept. Reinterpreting “genocide”

Norman M. Naimark  
Stalin's Genocides

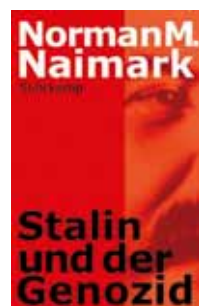
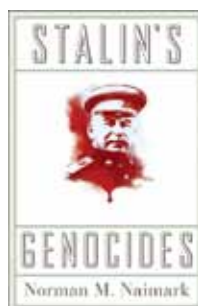
Princeton & Oxford 2010  
Princeton University Press  
163 pages, index<sup>1</sup>

In 1990, a debate began in leading American and British scholarly journals as to just how many people fell victim to Stalin's rule. Participants in the debate included prominent Kremlinologists like Alec Nove<sup>2</sup> and Stephen Wheatcroft,<sup>3</sup> who used demographic, economic, and other data combined with reports in memoirs to try to estimate the number of people who were executed, were deported to face an early death in exile, or died in famines the causes of which could be traced to government policy.

As Russian archival data became available, the discussions took on a more robust nature. Wheatcroft sorted the victims into categories: those executed during terror actions, those who died prematurely during the famine years of 1932–1933, and those who died during deportations of entire peoples. He distinguished the latter as *death from criminal neglect by the government* for better comparison of Stalinist and Nazi repression, since global figures on the millions of excess deaths used until that point had tended to cloud the qualitative differences between varieties of state terror.<sup>4</sup> Steven Rosefielde then reentered the debate with a reply in which his opening salvo was to categorize all excess deaths as *homicides* in the title of the article. Rosefielde's approach has not been adopted by other scholars, who have instead given us an increasingly complex picture of the causal connections that led to famines, as well as Stalin and his closest associates' underlying motives for carrying out various actions (reprisals, imprisonments, mass executions, or deportations).<sup>5</sup>

In light of this increasingly sophisticated analysis of the terror of the Stalin epoch, Norman Naimark turns things upside down in a recently published book by categorizing all of these events with a term that has, until now, had a precise meaning, but which he argues should be expanded. Specifically, he asserts that all the thoroughly studied phenomena that characterized the terror of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s should be included in the category of *genocide*, and hence the use of the plural in his title. The book has been translated into German, Ukrainian, and Russian; translations into Estonian and other languages are in progress. This fact, rather than the inherent qualities of the book, has triggered critical examination of Naimark's grossly simplified and, if anything, confusing account.

Norman Naimark is the Robert and Florence McDonnell Professor of East European Studies at Stanford University. He is



renowned for his studies of ethnic violence and of the Soviet occupation regime in Germany from 1945 onwards.<sup>6</sup> The present book, included in the series “Human Rights and Crimes against Humanity”, edited by Eric Weitz, seems to be merely an extended essay based on a number of arguments presented earlier in an article in the festschrift in honor of Robert Conquest reviewed in this journal by your humble servant.<sup>7</sup> After analyzing his extended version, my skepticism of Naimark's reasoning either for abandoning the legal concept of *genocide* as defined in the 1948 United Nations Convention or for applying the concept – with a stretch of the historical evidence – has only been reaffirmed.

**NAIMARK INCLUDES AMONG** Stalin's crimes the forced collectivization, expropriation, and deportation of the purportedly richer peasants (“kulak”) in 1930–1933, the famine that struck many regions of the Soviet Union (and in particular Ukraine) in 1932–1933, the Great Terror of 1937–1938, and the deportations of entire peoples in the USSR in 1937–1944, and argues that all of these separate events should be classified as genocide. This is a significant revision of the standard interpretation by Western historians of the historical evidence of the USSR, which is that there was nothing like the premeditated killing of a group of people, whether on the grounds of race, nationality, or religion.

The plural form of the English title, *Stalin's Genocides*, and of the Ukrainian and Russian translations *Genotsidi* or *Genotsidy Stalina*, implies that several or all of the well-known and currently heavily researched historical phenomena should be termed “genocide”. In recent years, few Western historians have argued that any series of events, except for the famine in Ukraine in the fall of 1932 and spring of 1933, can be termed genocide as defined by the UN convention. In order to accomplish his reinterpretation of the Stalin era, Naimark reasons along two contradictory lines concerning the very concept of genocide.

Naimark starts his argumentation with a cursory presentation of how the convention is allegedly only a perverted form of what the UN Commission had originally intended. In agreement with quite a few others, Naimark claims that the final draft of the convention narrowly focused only on persecutions leading to mass killings of people based on ethnicity, nationality, or religion because the Soviet Union had opposed the original draft, which also counted mass killings based on social and political criteria as genocide. Presumably, Naimark

argues, the USSR feared that such a convention would open the door to investigations of actions taken by the Soviet regime against its own people and against the peoples incorporated into the USSR early in World War II.

Naimark delves into the UN Commission that, in 1946–1948, attempted to draft the most precise convention possible in order to prevent the repetition of mass murders like the attempted elimination of European Jewry by the Nazis. He refers to the preliminary versions or drafts of the convention, but only as presented in a few American books on the subject. A more careful interpretation of all the deliberations of the Member States' legal experts involved in the Commission's work should, in this reviewer's opinion, be based on the primary sources, not textbooks whose reliability may vary. In this case, the task would be fairly easy, since the complete documentation is already available in print in an excellent edition by Hiram Abtahi and Philippa Webb.<sup>8</sup> In a single publication of almost 3,000 pages, Abtahi and Webb have brought together the records of the multitude of meetings which, in the context of the newly established United Nations, led to the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on December 9, 1948.

**DISCUSSIONS ABOUT** the wording of the convention have revolved around the finally adopted draft as being a concession to Soviet pressure to exclude actions that could be characterized as oppression and mass killings of *political groups*, on the one hand, and state actions that could lead to *cultural genocide*. The criticism that the UN Convention on Genocide did not address political groups is well-known and has been voiced in many contexts – but, obviously, few have taken the trouble to go back to the sources to see what arguments the lawyers from various countries presented against an expanded wording.<sup>9</sup>

The arguments for and against various wordings, definitions, and restrictions seem to have been much more nuanced than a cer-



## Continued. Reinterpreting “genocide”



**Lennart Samuelson**

Associate professor of economic history at the Stockholm School of Economics. His dissertation was a study of the Soviet war economy during the 1930s. He published *Plans for Stalin's War-Machine* (2000), and was editor of the anthology *Bönder och bolsjevik: Den ryska landsbygdens historia 1902–1939* [Farmers and the Bolsheviks: The history of rural Russia, 1902–1939] (2007), to which Moshe Lewin and Teodor Shanin, among others, contribute. In 2000 he received the newly established Hugo Raab Prize for solid contributions to military-historical research, and in 2007 the Tilas Prize for highly useful military-historical efforts.

tain historiographic trend tends to describe. For example, the Soviet representative argued that:

**It is a mistake to include political groups among the groups protected by the Convention on Genocide, just as it is a mistake to include political opinions among the grounds for perpetrating the crime of genocide.**

**Crimes committed for political motives are crimes of a special kind and have nothing in common with crimes of genocide. The very word “genocide” [which is] derived from the word “genus” – race, people – shows that it concerns the destruction of nations or races as such, for reasons of racial and national persecution and not for the particular opinions of such human groups.<sup>10</sup>**

The setting for the drafting of the Genocide Convention was the nascent Cold War that by 1947 had already given rise to renewed “information warfare” between the former Allies. In particular, propaganda from the Communist Information Bureau (*Kominform*, a recasting of the International dissolved in 1943) directed at the peoples of the British colonies was seen as a major communist effort to undermine the “Free World”. Shortly thereafter, London had set up its own anti-communist propaganda center and created a worldwide network for the distribution of articles, pamphlets, and books.<sup>11</sup> When the British delegation to the United Nations during the same period initiated an international investigation into the use of forced labor that emphasized the not always documented but allegedly widespread use of slave labor in Soviet Union, the Communist press was soon replete with articles condemning slave labor conditions in several British colonies.

**IT IS THUS** not surprising that the Soviet delegates insisted that the UN Genocide Convention be mandatory upon *dependent territories* as well as sovereign nation-states. They also urged an amendment, in line with an earlier proviso originally proposed by Raphael Lemkin himself in 1933, namely that *cultural genocide* be included in the convention. British representatives argued vehemently against both proposals because they feared – rightly or wrongly – that such a convention could be used against the United Kingdom.<sup>12</sup>

In a historical work like Professor Naimark's, readers have the right to demand a full-fledged historiographic background. Surprisingly enough, Naimark repeatedly laments the successful Soviet lobbying against



Illustration: Katrin Stenmark

the inclusion of political and social groups, in part or in whole, in the text of the 1948 convention, but fails to mention that the adoption of the convention immediately spurred a plethora of books and pamphlets that accused not only the Soviet Union under Stalin, but also the United States, of precisely that: *genocide in a wider sense than that expressed in the UN convention*.

By 1949, K. Pelekiš had published *Genocide: Lithuania's Threefold Tragedy*, and a year later the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (*Vyriausias Lietuvos Islaisvinimo Komitetas*) released its *Appeal to the United Nations on Genocide*. In 1950, the Estonian Information Office in Stockholm issued a paper by Aleksander Kaelas, *Human Rights and Genocide*, which referred to remarks in the UN General Assembly in September 1950. Albert Kalme published his *Total Terror: An Exposé of Genocide in the Baltics* (1951) and Arveds Svabe his *Genocide in the Baltic States* (Latvian National Fund in the Scandinavian Countries 1952). The exiled Hungarian Magyar Bizottság referred to the convention in his *Genocide by Deportation: An Appeal to the United Nations to Enforce the Law* (1951).

While the abovementioned works referred to nations and peoples that were incorporated into the USSR or sovietized in Eastern Europe, literature on the presumed genocide in

the Soviet Union proper was also at hand. Based on accounts by liberated Polish citizens and others who had come to the West, the early Cold War saw a mass market for books on the Soviet camps where slave labor was allegedly responsible for the intentional death of millions of innocent citizens. This was also the message in several chapters of the international – American, French, and Swedish – bestseller of 1947–1949, *I Chose Freedom* by the former Soviet engineer Viktor Kravchenko. The chapters of the book (ghostwritten and “edited” by Eugene Lyons) reprinted in *Reader's Digest* suggested that the entire Soviet military industry was dependent upon such death camps, which, according to Kravchenko, had 15–20 million slaves. These and other estimates of Soviet slave labor camps were reflected in books by Albert Herling, *The Soviet Slave Empire* (1951), and Guy Vinatrel, *L'URSS concentrationnaire: Travail forcé en Russie Soviétique* (1950). In South America, the pamphlet by Casimiro Verax, (a pseudonym of Kazimieras Cibiras), *El*

*imperio del genocidio: Las deportaciones y la esclavitud en el mundo soviético* [The empire of genocide: The deportations and slavery of the Soviet world] (1954) seems to have been widely distributed. These interpretations of the annexations of the Baltic States by the USSR in the 1940s were widespread throughout the Cold War era.

Norman Naimark has another forerunner well worthy of mentioning in a historiographic survey: the Chechen scholar Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, who under the pseudonym “Uralov” published a book in 1951 on the persecution of the Chechen people.<sup>13</sup> Avtorkhanov did not have exact data on the consequences of the 1944 deportation of the Chechen and Ingush peoples, but the point is that he characterized the event as an intentional killing operation against whole peoples, or, in other words, “genocide” (*narodoubiistvo*).

**ODDLY ENOUGH**, Naimark also fails to mention the great forerunner to his study, namely the solid collection of articles published by the Munich Institute for Studies of the History and Culture of the USSR, a well-known exile institution during the Cold War. In 1958, Nikolai Deker and Andrei Lebed edited the book *Genocide in the USSR: Studies in Group Destruction*.<sup>14</sup> The authors involved in the project wrote specifically about the elimination of social groups and referred to the UN 1948 Genocide Convention<sup>15</sup> in relation to the repression of the former ruling social classes, the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the merchants, the bureaucrats, and the richer peasants. Stalin’s struggle against the wealthy peasants is also termed genocide, as is the 1932–1933 famine: “In view of the fact that the famine of 1932–33 was *artificially created* and was directed against a definite social stratum, the peasantry, *this famine can only be described as an example of social genocide*.”<sup>16</sup> (Emphasis mine.) In passing, one may note that the author wrote that dekulakization is supposed to have claimed six million victims and the ensuing famine in 1932–1933 another six million.

It should be mentioned that the adoption of the UN Genocide Convention likewise spurred activist citizens in the United States to examine the country’s historical and current policy towards its Black population. In the pamphlet *We Charge Genocide*, published in 1951, the situation of African Americans in the US was condemned as precisely that: genocide. The foreword to a new edition of the book states:

**This historic Petition was first presented to the world in 1951. Ad-**

**dressed to the United Nations it was submitted to that body in Paris, France at the Palais Chaillott where the Fifth Session of the General Assembly had gathered. Simultaneously a delegation led by Paul Robeson presented copies to the office of the Secretary General of the UN in New York. We had two aims: to expose the nature and depth of racism in the United States; and to arouse the moral conscience of progressive mankind against the inhuman treatment of black nationals by those in high political places. The Petition called upon the UN to take notice of the fact that even a cursory examination would reveal the savage racist policy that determines the attitude and reaction of city, state and federal governments in their relations with black nationals. [...] The Petition declared that the racism of government was a criminal policy. It constituted a flagrant violation of the UN Charter, its Universal Declaration of Human Rights, more specifically the UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide and the Constitution of the United States of America.**<sup>17</sup>

Norman Naimark presumably takes for granted that his readers know that the UN Convention on Genocide was not ratified by the US Senate until forty years later, and for obvious reasons. It was finally made law in 1988, contingent upon a series of “conditions” known as the “Lugar-Helms-Hatch Sovereignty Package”, which according to one scholar significantly weakened this adapted convention text.

The analysis by Lawrence LeBlanc suggests that the bitter debates and opposition to the convention sprang from fears that it would be used *domestically* as a tool by groups such as African Americans and Native Americans who might hold the US accountable for genocide in matters of race relations.<sup>18</sup>

### III

It is no exaggeration to say that during most of the Cold War era, Western Kremlinologists accepted the notion that the scale of terror, repression, and deprivations seen in forced labor or internal exile all added up to genocide of an unprecedented scale. For example, Professor Stephen Cohen in his stimulating essay *Rethinking the Soviet Experience* wrote:

**Millions of innocent men, women, and children were arbitrarily arrested, tortured, executed, brutally deported, or imprisoned in the murderous prisons and forced-labor camps of the Gulag Archipelago. [...] No one has yet managed to calculate the exact number of unnatural deaths under Stalin. Among those who have tried, twenty million is a conservative estimate. Judged by the number of victims and leaving aside important differences between the two regimes, Stalinism created a holocaust greater than Hitler’s.**<sup>19</sup>

While others have argued against the comparison between Stalinism and Nazism, contending it is conducive to a relativization of the Shoah, Stephen Cohen obviously saw no such problem, and not only because he relied on quantitative data

on the number of victims that – as it later turned out – were far from accurate, but also because the seemingly systematic nature of Stalin’s terror, as described in the mainstream literature, was indeed littered with examples of death camps and mass executions. Suffice it to say that in his 1978 book on the infamous Kolyma camps in the Soviet Far East, Robert Conquest contended that the primary purpose of these camps was not gold extraction, but systematic extermination of the prisoners on a scale rivaling Hitler’s Final Solution. He calculated that from the late 1930s to the early 1950s at least three million people were eliminated out of the some three and a half million prisoners allegedly sent to Magadan and other ports in the Soviet Far East. Few reviewers of his book even dared to challenge his numbers in light of the horrific descriptions already known from the memoirs of Polish and German survivors of these camps.<sup>20</sup>

My point is thus that Norman Naimark would have lent much more credence to his arguments if he had bothered to mention the precedents in the literature that have likewise termed Stalin’s terror genocidal. He would then have had to acknowledge which of these forerunners’ descriptions have withstood the test of time. On the other hand, if Naimark had taken the trouble to read the original transcripts of the deliberations among lawyers over the draft convention, he would probably not have so blithely accepted the thesis that only the Soviet Union’s opposition to certain wording made the final version so different from that proposed by Lemkin and others at the end of World War II.

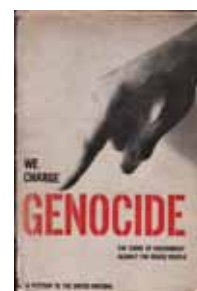
### IV

Norman Naimark also tries to use the original UN Convention’s concept of genocide as appropriate to characterize (a) the dekulakization of 1930–1933; (b) the mass famine of 1932–1933; (c) the Great Terror of 1937–1938; and (d) the deportations of entire peoples before and during World War II.

Naimark was asked in an interview why the title uses *genocides* in the plural given that he has otherwise spoken of “Stalin’s genocide” in the singular. His answer is connected to his main thesis:

**I don’t think this is an important distinction. The 1930s as a whole and the mass killings in the 1930s should be considered a single historical episode composed of a series of events, all of which are genocides.**

Each of the separate episodes –





## Continued. Reinterpreting “genocide”

the dekulakization, the Ukrainian famine, the attack on asocial people, the attack on national peoples like the Poles, Chechens, Ingush, and Ukrainians – should be considered episodes of genocide.

However, Naimark also argues that the current concept of genocide, twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in the wake of the well-known events in former Yugoslavia and Sudan, needs to be used in a wider sense in order to *understand* such historical phenomena as those mentioned above. This line of reasoning seems to lead to a situation in which any interested party can introduce their own use of such a value-laden term as “genocide” and dismiss the strivings of jurists to keep to a rigorous, non-contradictory use of terminology and concepts.

Naimark’s own extension of the concept of genocide to include the premeditated mass killings of political opponents, if accepted, would seem to require the concerned scholar to reassess several historical personalities as *génocidaires* of the same ilk as the Bolshevik leader. For example, the new book by Paul Preston on the aftermath of the 1936–1939 Spanish Civil War bears witness to the use of the term *Holocaust*, often considered uniquely characteristic of the extermination of the Jews of Europe, to apply also to General Franco’s early years in power. As with the extension of the *génocidaire* concept when applied to *political groups*, this same term would thus be attached to Marshal Gustav Mannerheim in Finland for the persecution of Socialists and Communists after the War of Independence in 1918, or to General Suharto of Indonesia for the 1965 killings of hundreds of thousands of members of the Communist Party – to mention only a few obvious cases of political massacres that Naimark’s attempts at reclassification would include in the same *genocidal* actions as the Shoah.<sup>21</sup>

**IN EARLY 2011**, Sergei Karaganov, a Russian political analyst chiefly known for his foreign policy surveys, was invited by President Dmitry Medvedev to speak on the theme of overcoming the historical legacy of Stalinism. As this group surrounding the Council for Human Rights established by President Medvedev has received no notice in Western media, it might be worthwhile to quote how Russia’s present ruling elite can describe their recent past in terms and concepts that make Naimark’s thesis look feeble.

At the assembly in Ekaterinburg<sup>22</sup> and in his later article on the same theme, Karaganov said the following to President Medvedev and the Human Rights Commission: “The

Russian people carried out revolution and led to power an anti-human and barbarous regime, and allowed it to exist, and took part in an ‘auto-genocide’ (*samogenotsid*), a systematic, wave-like annihilation of its best representatives, traditions, and the destruction of churches, cultural heritage, and in many respects, the culture as such.” Obviously, Karaganov alludes to the concept of *cultural genocide* as a consequence of Soviet policies.

**The auto-genocide began during the Civil War with the elimination and deportation of the intelligentsia and the clergy – the bearers of culture and traditional values, of the bourgeoisie – the strongest and most competitive part of society, of the aristocracy – the most educated and patriotic segment thereof, as the conservers (*khraniteli*) of national self-consciousness and pride. Thereafter followed the *golodomory* (terror-famines), collectivization that was aimed at extermination of the best peasants. [...] Then followed the repressions of the new intelligentsia and military. After the World War – of the prisoners-of-war.<sup>23</sup>**

It is thus obvious that Naimark’s essay-like book on the *génocidaire* Stalin will most probably find support among certain groups in today’s Russia, both among the elite and among the general public. From an analytical point of view, however, it is doubtful whether or not any actual new knowledge can be gleaned from the blurring of concepts such as genocide. It is more likely that Naimark’s essay will only lead to further obfuscations of the real causes and effects of the Stalinist terrorist regime. Outside a tiny current of partisans of the Russian Communists, whether the grand KPRF under Gennady Zyuganov<sup>24</sup> or the sectarians surrounding Viktor Anpilov<sup>25</sup>, it is beyond doubt that Stalin was responsible for the untimely deaths of millions of completely innocent citizens as well as his real or imagined political opponents. All the more so since in his writings from the late 1920s on Stalin decreed the physical destruction of his perceived enemies. However, having been involved in several research projects lately – on the collectivization of 1930–1934<sup>26</sup> and the Great Terror of 1937–1938<sup>27</sup> – I have all too often found that the empirical evidence for the conclusion that Stalin and his entourage actually went after people for their ethnic, racial, or religious origins is doubtful. Even all the hearsay concerning his alleged ambitions against Ukraine in 1932–1933 is easily refutable.



Like so many other observers, scholars, and politicians in the West, Naimark emphatically maintains that the Russian people today must not only repent but fully acknowledge the criminal deeds of the Georgian shoemaker’s son, Joseph Dzhugashvili – better known by his Russian sobriquet “Stalin” than by any of his Georgian underground noms de guerre like “Koba” – who ruled them for almost thirty years (1924–1953). The word “Georgia” is absent from Naimark’s text, so one is led to presume that the Georgian people have already fully assimilated the dire lessons of history in this respect, despite the fact that the only Stalin statue left unmo-  
lestled in the entire Soviet Union by 1991 was found in the city

of Gori, Georgia! Strangely enough, Naimark ignores the influence of the man’s Georgian background and conditions in the evolution of Dzhugashvili to the future tyrant and *génocidaire*. In light of the real situation in Gori and the rest of Georgia, it is peculiar that Naimark demands repentance only from the Russians but not from the Georgians.

Why indeed should only the Russian people want to apologize for this Georgian who, in the late 1920s, might as well be said to have usurped power in the All-Union Communist Party and ruled as a non-Russian tyrant over the whole Soviet Union for some twenty-five years? And this while the Georgian people, who to this day honor Stalin’s memory, should have no reason according to Naimark (and many others) to examine their history, mentality, and traditions in search of an explanation for the behavior of “the people’s greatest son”? Only in the aftermath of the 2008 war against Russia did the rulers, evidently in response to critique from foreign observers, deem it necessary to remove the statue of Stalin from the central square in his hometown of Gori!

**CONSIDERING THE ESTEEM** in which the Georgian public hold “their Dzhugashvili”, it is even more characteristic of the tendentious American campaign for which Naimark is a typical representative for him to allege that “a majority of Russians continue to hold Stalin in high esteem”, and to urge them, in a bid to improve their relations with the Ukrainians, Poles, Chechens, and Crimean Tatars, to “openly acknowledge and conscientiously investigate the crimes of the past”.

Gallup polls in recent years that allegedly show that Stalin is held in high esteem by ordinary Russians have been criticized as structurally biased and for having survey questions that do not meet the standards of ordinary statistical methods. Furthermore, the nation hardest hit by “Stalinist genocides” was, after all, not Ukrainians, Poles, Chechens or Tatars, but the Russians themselves, and few historians in Russia would argue along ethnic lines as to the origins of the terror and the repressive measures that victimized millions in the Russian Socialist Republic in the period of 1928–1953. Finally, any serious scholar who has followed recent historiography in Russia cannot have failed to notice the sea of publications, documentary and source collections, exhibitions, and television series intended precisely to broaden the public’s knowledge and understanding of the terrorist traits of the Stalinist regime in particular and the oppressive characteristics of the Soviet party-state in general. In other words, Naimark’s exhortation is tantamount

to banging on a wide-open door, and his conceptually confusing essay is hardly likely to contribute to greater knowledge or insight into the dramatic twentieth-century history of the country.

Certain Russian politicians and writers are demanding the removal of Lenin's Mausoleum from Red Square. Less often do the politicians suggest a more venerable, traditional resting place for Lenin's corpse – next to his wife Nadezhda Krupskaya who lies in a grave in front of the Kremlin wall alongside other leaders of the Communist Party. But what should be done with the rest of the necropolis along the Kremlin Wall? In a long row, you find the graves of Stalin, Frunze, Sverdlov, Brezhnev, and other communist leaders. Considering that communists will continue to revere his memory, is it acceptable in a “modernized” Russia to keep a place of pilgrimage and a monument to one of the worst tyrants of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in such a place? Finally, one has to wonder whether Professor Naimark would propose another graveyard for Stalin, and if so, what the most appropriate place would be. ✕

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## Critique and morality. Consensus and dissent in post-revisionist Soviet studies

**Den goda tanken och  
den onda erfarenheten  
[The good idea and the  
evil experience]**

Lund University  
Department of History  
Lund 2011, 157 pages



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*Intelligensaristokrater och  
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[Intelligence aristocrats  
and archive martyrs: norms  
for scholarly excellence  
in Swedish historical  
research].

**F**ew scholars today deny that that their work is in some way related to values. On the contrary, most scholars acknowledge and even make use of a certain value-relatedness in order to emphasize the importance of their work. This means that the nature of the questions posed may be determined by values, but the answers given should not be value judgments but value-neutral empirical or logical statements. The ethos behind this attitude is *value subjectivism*. Cognitive norms are universal, inspiring values that are subjective and freely chosen. The formula behind this ethos is freedom and rational self-control. The spheres of morality and cognition are supposed to be separated so that they can be theoretically clarified and the relation between their separate means and ends scrutinized. This hampers immediate emotional experience but simultaneously enhances moral agents' ability to leave a mark on the world by making them better informed. In the case of historical research, this doctrine prevents the moral passions from defining the entire research process in detail, which is helpful, since large parts of human history are quite a grim business from the viewpoint of contemporary moral standards.

Value subjectivism is not an idea without alternatives, however. Proponents of *Lebensphilosophie* on both the left and the right have argued that the technical character of the scientific ethos dispossesses the human intellect of will and intensity, thus leaving it powerless and agnostic. Another way to overcome the agnosticism intertwined with value subjectivism is to hold the position of *value objectivism*. Morality is then immanent in historical facts, and not at all separated from cognition. Intellectual quality coincides with moral certitude. A strong proponent of value objectivism in history is the German scholar Jörn Rüsen. Rüsen has earned a lasting reputation as one of the world's leading experts on German historicism. In recent decades, he has also launched a large-scale normative project regarding the uses of "history for life". At the core of this project is the claim that the past is impossible to conceive of as static other. It is rather a precondition for all historical thinking that the past is inseparable from the present and also from the visions of the future. The merging of these dimensions is unavoidable because historians, unlike other scholars, can only conceive of the past by narrating it, according to Rüsen. It is of course possible for the historian to have separate views of morality in the past and in the present. Rüsen tries to say rather that such double standards would be irrational. They



Illustration: Katrin Stenmark

would, in German philosophical terminology, be expressions of "instrumental reason" with the whole of the human "life-world" taken into account. Their narratives would in that case be devoid of "meaning", that is, cognition would *not* be related to values. The traditional, value subjective scholar is portrayed as powerless in the face of ideological forces, unless he consciously adopts them.<sup>1</sup>

Rüsen was recently granted an honorary doctorate at the University of Lund, where his normative and highly abstract thinking has earned him a dedicated following. It is not surprising, then, that a recently published study from Lund aims to follow in his footsteps. Valter Lundell's study is a bold attempt to analyze history from the standpoint of value objectivism. Although this standpoint is not clearly stated, value objectivism is the theoretical underpinning of the study, and

Lundell would certainly regard the sentence "communism is evil" as descriptive truth rather than subjective opinion. The aim of Lundell's study is to investigate "how it can be that, with the fall of the Soviet Union 20 years behind us, it is still difficult to form a consensus around what role the communist experience should play in Swedish historical culture". Lundell would certainly not agree that the lack of consensus, or "the asymmetrical historical culture", as he chooses to call it, mirrors the plurality of views among researchers and democratic citizens. Inspired by Rüsen's thinking, the social psychology of Leon Festinger, and the conservative

American sociologist Paul Hollander, Lundell searches for the “deeper causes” of this lack of consensus. He has therefore conducted in-depth interviews with nine university historians and eleven history teachers from the Swedish secondary education system, the *gymnasium*. The university historians are especially interesting to him because they all signed an infamous appeal to stop a recent state sponsored exhibition of crimes against humanity under communist regimes.

The method applied consists of confronting the respondents with questions derived from three different paradigms of research: the totalitarian paradigm, which originates with the attitudes of the Cold War; the revisionist paradigm, which proposes a challenge to the totalitarian view in the seventies and eighties; and last but not least the “post-revisionist paradigm”, which conforms with the views of modern Sovietological research, according to Lundell. The first two paradigms are summarized quite brilliantly in short explanatory narratives. The third paradigm, however, Lundell declines to summarize, which is quite surprising since he unabashedly proclaims it to be the supreme alternative that has refuted the revisionist paradigm altogether, and thus reinstated the totalitarian paradigm in a new and more versatile form.

The main conclusion of his study is that the university historians, and, to a lesser extent, the secondary school teachers are lagging behind the progress of Sovietological research, that is, the “post-revisionist paradigm”. They come up short as moralists and are haunted by quasi-religious sentiments towards communism, the loss of which causes mental dilemmas such as “cognitive dissonance”, “moral relativism”, and a bundle of similar things. As interesting as these questions may be, it is not clear whether Lundell actually pursues an active interest in them, or simply suggests his explanations for derogatory purposes. Attributing an opponent’s position to mental illness might make a spectacular TV show, but ranks low in a scientific debate.

Although Lundell fails to give a clear account of what the post-revisionist paradigm consists of, it is possible to deduce its components from frequent references to it in his analysis: it is a thoroughly idealistic and hermeneutical explanation that posits the Soviet terror against its own citizens as chiefly caused by the ideology of communism, produced by Karl Marx and consciously put into practice by Lenin, Stalin, and the Soviet people. As a historical explanation, this *may* of course be true, but Lundell is not out to validate this explanation or to show that it reflects a consensus or a majority among

Sovietologists. The explanation rather serves to elevate communism to the same mythical level as Nazi ideology: an archetype of evil for our secular time. Why not attempt a demythologization of Nazism instead, if the concern is to improve the symmetry of historical culture?

He also has a very sanguine idea of objectivity. The state-sponsored exhibitions are repeatedly referred to as “pure enlightenment”, and on page 134 he proclaims the explanations of his survey respondents to be intellectually weak because of their “caution towards ideology and morality”. He devotes a chapter to methodological self-reflection but does not try to invalidate or challenge his position of value objectivism. It is fair to say that his methodology consists of moral identification with certain views, coupled with a few pinches of arm-chair psychology and German *Wesensschau*. In fact, Lundell’s “post-revisionist paradigm” is more or less synonymous with the view expressed in a much-debated article by Kristian Gerner from 1999.<sup>2</sup> Lundell has not managed to achieve critical distance from the biased brilliance of Gerner, and a paucity of guidance seems to have been offered by the academic supervisors. Gerner’s position is hardly strengthened by such doctrinaire apprenticeship, which naturally leads to ideological ossification rather than critical development.

I agree with Rösen and his followers that the scientific ethos of value subjectivism is problematic. Clearly, it is not a norm that serves its purpose independently of the use individuals make of it. It might degenerate into indifference to moral problems, and so in practice resemble the hollow catechism of *value nihilism*. But here I think that Rösen and his followers are beating a dead horse. Few scholars in the humanities and social sciences would agree that statements expressing values are equivalent to “any arbitrarily compounded series of words” as Rudolf Carnap provocatively stated in his *The Unity of Science* (1934). On the other hand, the logical perfection Carnap professed has a certain similarity to the moral perfection envisaged by Rösen. Both share the dream of consensus. There is a general weakness in Jörn Rösen’s thinking in that he tends to suppress the possibility of irresolvable conflicts between norms. Cognitive norms such as disinterestedness, universalism, and organized skepticism might not at all be reconciled harmoniously with norms of morality. So if the case for value objectivism in history is hardly furthered by Lundell’s study, perhaps there is still a lesson to be learned. Historical writing is fostered by righteousness, but not always the most intense forms of righteousness. ✖

simon larsson

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## A Tony Judt Century. Last talks

Tony Judt with  
Timothy Snyder  
*Thinking the  
Twentieth Century*

New York 2012  
The Penguin Press  
414 pages

**W**e were so similar, Tony Judt and I. Yet we were so different in so many ways. Both of us were born in London in the 1940s, had Eastern European secular Jewish family backgrounds, lived in the US, trained as historians. We even attended some of the same seminars in Cambridge in the late 1970s. But still, he was completely unique. Outspoken, opinionated (he took pride in the fact), argumentative and aggressive. He stood out from the rest of us historians, who were innately introverted. He caused a mighty uproar with one of his early articles in which he scathingly rejected the new forms of history that were informed by sociology, social anthropology, and political science, and he disliked feminist history to boot. To me the new forms of history were wonderful and ground-breaking novelties; Tony thought they fostered “bad” history and “clowns in royal purple” pretending to be historians. Most of us wanted to change the whole content of history, but Tony wanted to use traditional history to make moral statements.

For Tony Judt the true territory of the historian was limited to national politics, macro-economic policy, the ideas that underpinned the building of political and economic structures, and the personalities that made the choices. Through this limitation he could emerge after the turn of the twenty-first century as perhaps the only intellectual historian with nearly world-wide influence. Tragically stricken by the degenerative muscular disease ALS, he died in August 2010. During his progressively worsening illness a colleague, Timothy Snyder, started a series of conversations dealing with Judt’s intellectual trajectory and how it related to his view of history. It has now appeared as *Thinking the Twentieth Century*.

**THE NINE CONVERSATIONS** roam over an incredible number of issues and naturally go back and forth. All of them are deadly serious though there is a Monty Pythonesque moment when Snyder and Judt go through the list of British prime ministers to see whether any of them was an “intellectual”. Most of the talks begin with reminiscence over some stage in Tony’s life or academic career. Above all, the conversations document how, after moving to New York, Judt became a political moraliste with an explicit ethical viewpoint and with an international impact.

Judt describes how he was groomed by the editor of the *New York Review of Books* to have the courage to expand the range of his public writing from European history into international foreign policy issues. As he admits, he would “never have had the intellectual



## Continued. Last talks



**David Gaunt**

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or social self-confidence to propose those subjects” himself. But he became persuaded in spite of doubts that he really could “think and comment upon subjects far removed from [his] formal scholarly concerns”. This leap was perhaps not so improbable given Judt’s ingrained willingness to stick his neck out. He discovered soon that many other public pundits with access to the media often knew even less about the issues under debate than he did. In addition, they often lacked the most elementary ethical positions on war or peace, but were the mouthpieces of ideologies. This became most clear when Judt, nearly alone among all media commentators, questioned the wisdom of invading Iraq in 2003. Eager also to punch holes in the theories of political scientists, he pointed out how the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan disproved the theory then widely held that democracies do not start wars. They do, after a great deal of manipulation, disinformation, and downright lies, he stressed.

**JUDT ATTAINED** a unique position. Marginalized by choice from his colleagues, he formed his own center, the Remarque Institute, and broke away from the Department of History. At the same time he grew in importance as a public commentator. This status was reinforced by the publication of his major work *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (2005). This is a very wide-ranging book of close to nine hundred pages with few references and no bibliography. One of its best points is Judt’s ability to integrate the history of Eastern Europe with that of Western Europe. This is no mean feat: many had tried and failed before him. The Polish exiles Leszek Kołakowski and Jan Gross brought Judt into contact with Eastern European dissidents. Along the way he taught himself the Czech language. He discovered a whole generation of intellectuals, such as Adam Michnik and Václav Havel, marked by a lifelong experience with communism. Their message was clear: there was “nothing to be gained from negotiating with authoritarian regimes” because what the dissidents wished to achieve those regimes simply could never deliver.

But it is actually the West that is highest on Judt’s mind. He holds that the century’s main intellectual political debate was that between the ideas of Maynard Keynes, the British economist, in deep conflict with the ideas of Friedrich Hayek, his Austrian colleague. Note the total absence of Marxism in Judt’s narrative. The conflict was about the role of the state in economic life. Keynes described the positive role that government could play not just in overcoming the depression of the 1930s, but also in creating a welfare state which could finance various forms of social services and benefits. Hayek insisted that the state should be far removed from the economy and that the private sector could provide the same services more efficiently. In the early years after World War II there was nearly universal consensus in Europe that Keynes was right. However, since the 1970s Hayek’s view has increasingly broken that consensus.

By the end of the book Judt appears to despair. The dialogue focuses on the role of the intellectual in the present century. The message is decidedly defensive. The role of the twentieth-century intellectual might well have been to be visionary, future-oriented, utopian or at least progressive. In the twenty-first century, the intellectual’s role is reduced to that of a rear-guard realist fighting to prevent democracies from becoming worse societies. ❌

david gaunt

## The burden of sad times.

**Stefano Bottoni**  
**Un altro Novecento**  
**L'Europa orientale**  
**dal 1919 a oggi**  
**[Another**  
**twentieth century:**  
**Eastern Europe from 1919**  
**to the present day]**

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404 pages

**S**tefano Bottoni, an adjunct professor of Eastern European history at Bologna University, was invited in 2006 to take part in the work of the Presidential Committee for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania as an expert in the history of Romania’s Hungarian minority. He has published numerous papers in Italian and Hungarian (his mother tongues), as well as in English, on the history and international relations of Hungary and Romania. In addition, his book *Transilvania Rossa: Il Comunismo Romeno e la Questione Nazionale (1944–1965)* [Red Transylvania: Romanian communism and the national question (1944–1965)] is an interesting monograph that deals with the development of an ethnocratic state in Romania during the rule of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej: government policies were aimed at the Romanization of Transylvania, the assimilation of the Hungarian minority, and the marginalization and neglect of German and Jewish minorities. Having become a member of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2009, Bottoni decided to publish *Un altro Novecento*, a history of Eastern Europe from 1919 to the present. This was a vast and difficult task to which few others in Italian historiography had dedicated their energy.

**THE BOOK WAS** presented to the Italian public as an interpretative synthesis “intended for specialists and for all readers interested in the recent history of a peripheral area whose needs and problems increasingly impact the social and political dynamics of a continent that is formally reunified, but still divided by invisible walls and reciprocal differences”. The book is based on a number of central themes that allow an understanding and a sense of the contemporary history of countries that, with the dissolution of the three multinational empires, first experienced the fall of liberal systems and then became territories to be conquered, by German National Socialism and later by Soviet occupation. Finally, in the 1990s, these countries found themselves on a path towards European integration characterized by economic shock within the framework of a fragile democracy.

It should be pointed out that the national events described in this book do not emphasize any particular geographic region, nor do they marginalize the history of any individual Eastern European State. Rather, they combine “a general timeline view with a comparative thematic approach, focusing on the social and economic development of the various countries”.

But what does Bottoni mean exactly by “Eastern Europe”? This is not an insignifi-

## Another face of the Twentieth Century

cant consideration in an attempt to identify a region that is defined solely by the sum of the events of its component nations, and that lacks a center and a periphery when it comes to the international economic and political decisions of the hegemonies in the West and the East. Bottoni acknowledges that “the concept of Eastern Europe has [...] for some time lacked scientific legitimacy, having become an appellation that is closely bound to a political context and the relationship between this region and Western civilization”. In this book, “Eastern Europe” refers to “the collection of territories that, having witnessed the dissolution of three multiethnic empires after the First World War, subsequently experienced Soviet-style communism from 1939”. This includes twenty present-day states: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania. The book also makes reference to the history of Eastern Europe’s “peripheries”, namely the decision-making centers (Russia as a tsarist empire and subsequently as a Soviet empire), and the states involved in or created by the dissolution of the multinational empires, but not included in the experience of real socialism: Austria, Finland, West Germany, Greece and Italy. The pivotal role of Italy’s northeastern Friuli-Venezia Giulia region between the blocs is a more complicated issue that has yet to be investigated thoroughly.

The biggest problem in preparing a historical synthesis of Eastern Europe is “the extreme political, social and cultural diversity” of a region that “never developed a real supranational community” and whose common denominator was a prewar past consisting of multinational empires, a war of extermination, and forty years of submission to the Soviet empire. The most unifying factor was perhaps the memory of a past that never passes, consisting of the shared experience of real socialism. According to the Hungarian historian Istvan Rev, the burden of this memory of “sad times” is still present in contemporary Eastern European societies.

**IT IS ON THIS** very lack of a truly homogenizing factor that Bottoni bases the underlying thesis of his book. In order to decipher and narrate the twentieth-century history of a region that has not followed any type of political planning, it is not sufficient to employ nationalism and the ethnic factor as a key. To do so would reduce this history to “a continuous series of vendettas and massacres driven by ancestral impulses” (p. 16). While taking into account the significance of national and

ethnic factors, the author believes that the importance of the social and economic development of the various countries must also be understood in order to convey the complexity of Eastern Europe. “Another” *Novecento* was the century of nationalist movements and authoritarian regimes whose presence in Eastern Europe cannot be assimilated into the mold of Italian fascism or German National Socialism. Rather, their presence demonstrates the persistence of cultural, social, and political elements of the old multinational empires in new national realities. However, as Bottoni emphasizes, the Eastern European nationalism that had become familiar to Western European interwar public opinion was only one of the many elements of the social and political life of small Eastern European states. The author considers it misleading to catalog the creation of Eastern European states as “impossible democracies”, and he encourages the reader not to judge the historical development of the interbellum period only as a prelude to an inevitable catastrophe. In these countries, state control allowed spaces of freedom that were unimaginable during the fifty-year period of communism. This was especially true in the cultural realm, where the elite created a mass political culture centered on a national independent state that would be born after 1989, when national sovereign communities were reconstituted.

The roots of the Eastern European states’ catastrophe may be sought instead in the expansionist policies of Nazi Germany, which conducted a war of conquest and annihilation that only ended with the Red Army’s liberation-cum-occupation. This provided “the only salvation” for peoples reduced to

slavery by Nazism and collaborationist regimes, but it also resulted in the massacre of hundreds of thousands of civilians by Soviet soldiers, who had conducted one of the largest military operations in modern history. It is important to remember the difference between the period after the Second World War in Western Europe and that in Eastern European countries: the latter was far more traumatic, and fundamental for the subsequent reinterpretation of events by individual national communities.

**LIKE THE WAR** of extermination, the collaborations with and resistances against the Nazi invasion – including the Soviet occupation, which lasted much longer – represent a common experience in all of the countries considered here. The Eastern European countries had to come to terms with their past by purging the collaborationists and forcing millions of people to leave their homes in order to comply with a political plan that envisaged homogeneous national areas. The Soviets applied this principle to national minorities, condemning “the past behavior of the minority community and the geopolitical position of the states involved in the conflict”. In this way, they achieved an



Illustration: Katrin Stenmark



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## Continued. The burden of sad times

“ethnic simplification of the territory and of the social space” that resulted in thirty million Eastern Europeans enduring population changes, forced relocation, deportation to work camps, and massacres. Bottoni also mentions the annihilation of Jewish communities as a peculiar characteristic of Eastern European countries. A new anti-Semitism, rooted in xenophobia and social envy driven by communist movements, resulted in the pogroms that drove tens of thousands of people to emigrate to the West or to Israel.

Bottoni also criticizes the concept of the “Sovietization” of Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1948, which incorrectly associates the Soviet military occupation of some regions in Eastern Europe with the conquest of power by the communists. The history of communist conquest is “complex and sometimes contradictory”. The communist regimes of Eastern Europe were created through “a political, social and cultural revolution aimed at reproducing the system forged in the Soviet Union by Stalin”. Every effort of the Eastern European communist parties was aimed at copying the Soviet model – from the issuance of new constitutions based on the Soviet one, to industrialization and agricultural collectivization, to the transformation of the managerial classes on the basis of political loyalty. Another important consideration identified by Bottoni is that the advent of the Soviet bloc temporarily froze national and territorial conflicts, replacing ethnic rifts with policies that integrated minorities. This resulted in a radical review of the individual populations’ national pasts by communist regimes. These years were also characterized by “a complex web of political and ideological violence, as well as social, ethnic and religious repression”, that is, purges within parties and mass repression instituted by the political police.

**COMPARED WITH** that phase, the Khrushchev era was one of continuity and breakdowns, inconsistencies and paradoxes. Nonetheless, the new era changed the face of Eastern European communities thanks to a regimentation that created new social spaces and better living conditions for millions of people. Within this general framework, the utopia of real socialism was brought to a halt by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and then normalization under Brezhnev’s grayness. As the system tried to meet the expectations of previous generations, Bottoni explains, it earned the complete mistrust of the younger generations in Eastern European countries.

Subsequent economic decline was decisive in the fall of the Soviet Empire. Bottoni deals

with the various trajectories of this decline and the paths that various countries followed away from real socialism during the 1980s – from a repressive nationalism (Romania and Bulgaria) and an increase in propaganda (East Germany and Czechoslovakia), to explicit attempts to abandon the socialist model (Hungary and Poland).

Subsequent events in 1989–1990 quickly redrew the European political map. The dissolution of the Eastern European federated states of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in 1991–1993 engendered a bitter debate, from which many of the points discussed in this book emerged. According to Bottoni, neither of these countries was destined to fail because “they were both born in a time of crisis out of political will and accompanied by a long intellectual gestation, due to the inability of communist regimes to manage national differences in a more satisfactory way than the regimes of the interwar period”. Overall, it was an extraordinary period of change, and its non-violent outcome was by no means expected. The Yugoslav catastrophe, according to Bottoni, was an exception among the unresolved ethnonational disputes, which would suggest that the handling of diversity has now become a global problem.

In the economic decline of between 15 per cent and 40 per cent that occurred with the uncontrolled privatizations in Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 1990s, Bottoni nonetheless perceives the liberation of the new generations. With the freedom to travel and the availability of technological innovations, these new generations turned out to be the real winners of this period of change, to the detriment of those born in the ’40s and ’50s, for whom the end of communism also meant the loss of social status and existential meaning. In this atmosphere, a selective nostalgia for the totalitarian past developed, while the search for responsibility for crimes perpetrated during the dictatorships – using the evidence of state archives that had become public – threatened to become a form of political and economic blackmail.

**BOTTONI DEDICATES** the conclusion of his book to European integration. This he considers a positive development, given that the imposition of legal standards has contributed to the democratization of countries defined as imperfect democracies or semi-authoritarian systems, even though the cases of Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria have shown how “corrupt and inefficient executors can frustrate the positive aspects of European integration”. In the new century, the region’s challenges lie in understanding the problems of the immediate present. It would be useful to reappraise the journalistic stereotype that makes nationalism, anti-Semitism, and religious fundamentalism “specters that reappear in every news item as a threat to democracy, demonstrating that Eastern Europe remains an uncivilized place after all”. Bottoni highlights the socio-demographic problems faced by Eastern Europe: emigration and demographic decline, with a consequent decrease in active labor and taxpayers, a sharp increase in people receiving state assistance, and a lack of socio-cultural integration of Romani communities. However, as Bottoni explains, “the challenge of the social sustainability of post-communist Eastern European capitalism has now transcended the ethical dimension of protecting minority groups to become one of the thorniest social issues of our continent”. He concludes that, “in order to prevent continuing fragmentation into strong centers and forgotten peripheries, theaters

of conflict and massacres, Europe must learn to face the challenges and problems that are now common to East and West with no mental reservations”.

*Un altro Novecento* has succeeded in providing an interesting and balanced synthesis that summarizes the main themes in the history of Eastern European countries as highlighted by historiography, correlating interpretations with many examples, analyzing rather than simplifying the narrative, and thus conveying the complexity of history. Furthermore, Bottoni provides a rich source of inspiration for researchers who wish to delve deeper into the history of Eastern Europe: the book has a useful, up-to-date bibliography and ample endnotes, which unfortunately require page-turning. Since the book is currently only available in Italian, this reviewer hopes that it will be translated into other languages, for it deserves to be known by the general public worldwide, and by the academic community in particular. ✖

francesco zavatti

# A MEGAPHONE FOR THE “ARTIST-POLITICIAN”

**THIS YEAR'S BERLIN BIENNALE**, the seventh incarnation, is called “Forget Fear”. The curators are Polish artist Artur Żmijewski and Joanna Warsza, the latter active in the Warsaw-based organization *Krytyka Polityczna* (Political Critique). Żmijewski and Warsza have together created a platform where the art tourist can take in political manifestations from all over the world, from the mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, Antanas Mockus, a practitioner of non-violence, to the civil rights movement in Hungary. Things heat up when the focus is switched to the lines between Poland, Germany, and the EU. In Świebodzin near the Polish-German border zone – usually a zone of smuggling, prostitution, and violence – Miroslav Patecki has built a gigantic statue of Jesus gazing across the landscape. The work of building the statue was filmed and the documentary shown during the Berlin Biennale.

The activist art collective *Voïna* (War) was denied exit visas from Russia to attend the press conference, even though they were the associate curators of the entire Biennale. “But surely it is the Schengen countries that decide who is allowed in, not the countries outside who gets to leave”, a journalist from Copenhagen opined.

*Voïna* are the creators of several actions that have garnered considerable attention. They painted a seventy-meter-long phallus on the Liteinyi drawbridge in St. Petersburg, thus creating a huge “Fuck You” sign pointed directly at the headquarters of the secret police on the shore. They also participated in the “blue bucket” protests, a street uprising in which motorists put blue buckets on their car roofs as a protest against the way powerful politicians routinely use flashing blue lights to abuse the envied high-speed lanes in Moscow, where traffic jams are relentless.

**THE HUB OF THE ENTIRE** Biennale is KunstWerke, The Institute for Contemporary Art, now an established cultural institution that has over the years shown high-quality exhibitions including “Shrinking Cities”, “Privatizations: Contemporary Art from Eastern Europe”, and “Regarding Terror: The RAF Exhibition”. Thus a zone of cheap, squatted buildings was transformed in the space of a few years into a gentrified gallery district. Klaus Biesenbach, now the director of the prestigious MoMA PS1 in New York, founded both KunstWerke and the Berlin Biennale “to give space to controversy”.

The Biennale has worked as a megaphone for the “artist-politician” dedicated to using the alternative means of art to create power “without the fear, opportunism, and cynicism of the politicians”, according to curator Joanna Warsza. “We want to give a voice to people other than the tiny elite that usually monopolizes the major international art events.”

**ONE OF THE MAIN** themes in Berlin was to bring street-level political debates to the fore by putting them in the art salons. The other main theme was memory: how do we describe history, how do we relate to our history, and is there one collective image that is cherished above all others?



“Draftsmen's Congress” initiated by Pawel Althamer at St. Elisabeth-Kirche.

Photo: Sandra Teitge

In the middle of tourist flows among the city landmarks of Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag building, with its glass dome by world-renowned architect Norman Foster, is the unfinished Sinti and Roma Holocaust Memorial. The foundation pit for the pedestal is filled with debris and rain water and is partly hidden behind a mobile construction hut and shabby chicken wire. Even if marked on the biennale map, both my friend and I, who have lived in the city for twenty years, had difficulty finding it. When we first passed it, we thought it was just one more of those non-sites so plentiful in Berlin.

In the “Berlin-Birkenau” project, people can sign up to plant a birch sapling from Auschwitz-Birkenau and thus assume responsibility for caring for a memorial for several decades. “Join Us in Remembering” shows objects that millions of people displaced in World War II tried to save along with themselves. We have seen black-and-white photographs of people walking in columns along endless roads of mud, dragging their belongings with them after having left their homes, farms, and businesses. A carefully pressed handkerchief embroidered with the family monogram, a muff that protected fingers from frostbite, the coat worn by pregnant woman. As the only material link to the family's roots, these pitiful objects and their stories have been cherished as precious heirlooms by children and great-grandchildren. The exhibition is being made permanent and will be shown at Deutschlandhaus, just a stone's throw from Potsdamer Platz.

As soon as the gunpowder smoke had settled after the performance art piece “Reenactment of the Battle of Berlin, 1945”, I asked the Polish “soldier” dressed in a Russian uniform, “Is this a way to cope with the war trauma? Or a way to communicate history?”

“No”, said the soldier, in Germany for the first time even though he does not live far from the border. “Not at all. I am here because I collect uniforms and stuff from the war. Weapons and so on.”

He explained that the Berlin audience that day was served the “light version” of the battle: “Not so much blood”. After all, it took place on a Sunday afternoon

in a recreational park between amusement park swans for couples in love to be photographed in and dinosaurs for the children to climb on. This is where I met Janet Cardiff's collaborator George Bures Miller, who recorded the sounds of machine guns for their “Documenta 13” video walk.

The Berlin Biennale is more than an art exhibition in the traditional sense. It is a network of places and events that are tied together for a few months in the summer. Another purpose is to start an ongoing process and to enable the political art manifestations to continue after the official event has ended. The net has been cast over that which until two decades ago was an insurmountable barrier, and the threads reach far beyond the city limits. This November,

teatr.doc in Moscow is going to perform an action in which the actors are displaced migrants without passports from former soviet republics.

The questions posed by this year's Berlin Biennale are an expression of anger over the way things are arranged in the world, the issues Naomi Klein has pinpointed in her books *No Logo* and *The Shock Doctrine*: the lack of attention to issues that concern ownership of access to the public space, control of money, and frustration about how the art world is being controlled by increasingly few hands, even as events are increasing in number and being spread all over the world.

**THE 2012 BERLIN BIENNALE** has, quite rightly, had to withstand some criticism: “Lukewarm cynicism”, proclaimed an indignant *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Certainly, it could have been somewhat less of a blunt instrument. And yes, I would have preferred that the participants understand they were involved in an art event and not just an ordinary protest action or theatrical performance. And it is possible that today's Occupy members are not as well-spoken as their predecessors, the situationists of the 1968 revolts or the German artist Joseph Beuys with his social sculptures. But they have nonetheless found their way into the most rarefied circles of the art world. After the Berlin Biennale, Occupy went on to Documenta in Kassel, the most important art event in Germany. Political art has thus finally made a true breakthrough, even in the news media. And news from the former Eastern Bloc is also being given more space. The Russian punk group Pussy Riot, whose message about Putin's pact with the Orthodox Church, moved from social media to the elite news forums – the news columns of the daily broadsheets. After all, the trick is getting people to listen, which can be especially hard when you are trying to bring attention to oppression and suffering. ✕

**margareta tillberg**

Associate professor, researcher at CBEEs.



# FASHION TALKS

by **Ekaterina Kalinina**  
photos **Ute Langkafel**



“We must not forget that an object is the best messenger of a world above nature.”

Roland Barthes, 1972<sup>1</sup>

In Shane Meadows’s film *This Is England* (2006), which portrays skinhead subculture in Britain in the 1980s, the twelve-year-old schoolboy Shaun (played by Thomas Turgoose) becomes a member of the skinhead scene. The group he joins is apolitical and fashion-oriented: it includes both white and black members, who spend their free time hanging around. The process of his initiation involves a change of behavior, music preferences, hairdo, and outfit. The symbol of his transformation is perhaps the purchase of a pair of Dr. Martens boots. As soon as all the necessary elements of his “uniform” as a skinhead are in place, the other members recognize him as one of them.

Starting in the late 1950s, when England’s postwar economic boom led to increased purchasing by many working class kids, inspired by American and British music, actors, and Carnaby Street, youth groups developed their own behaviors and styles, with outfits ranging from the practical, such as boots and jeans, to the more aspiring and elegant, such as dancehall suits. These youths, usually referred to as *mods*, were known for their interest in fashion and music, but also for their violent behavior. When the mods started to fragment in the 1960s, a skinhead culture began to emerge, identified by shorter hair, a more pronounced working class image, and a fondness for ska, rocksteady and early reggae music. Early skinheads were not necessarily part of any political movement, but by the 1970s some of them had aligned themselves with National Front and their violence became more

political and directed towards immigrants. Largely because of its portrayal in the mass media, the skinhead subculture was viewed as one that promoted racism and neo-Nazism, although there were anti-racist as well as merely apolitical youth among them.

This complex evolution of youth cultures, accompanied by media scandal and ambiguous relations with consumer-goods industries, led Dick Hebdige to regard subcultures as forms of resistance to authorities and the dominant social standards.<sup>2</sup> Individuals who shared a feeling of being neglected by those standards came together and developed a sense of group identity. Scholars have pointed out, quite rightly, that rebellious youth signaled their group membership through distinctive and symbolic appropriation of visible status and cultural markers, such as accessories, clothing, music, mannerisms, and argot. But even though the mods, rockers, punks and other subcultures were described in the media as “aggressive” and “subversive”, they nevertheless became incorporated into the mainstream: as Stuart Hall pointed out, media not only registered their resistance, but also normalized them within the dominant mythology.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the conversion of the subcultural signs – such as music and dress codes – into mass-produced consumer goods undermined their rebellious meaning. I will nevertheless argue that the nature of these subcultures was first and foremost about *consumption*, because they intentionally communicated “through commodities even if the meanings attached to those commodities are purposefully distorted or

overthrown”.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is almost impossible to find a clear-cut distinction between commercial exploitation and the creative appropriation of consumer goods constructed by the subcultures. But at the same time it becomes evident that it is the *way* and the *context* in which commodities are used that mark subcultures in relation to consumer industries. Youth cultures revive and transform fashion items and patterns of behavior by relocating them into the contemporary context and ascribing to them new meanings through different use. Through this unconventional or unexpected use, youth cultures question the predominant values and social order. Thus rebellion does not necessarily have to be violent: any unconventional interpretation of, for instance, gender differences, mediated through dress codes and ways of life, can potentially appear in a list of subcultures, which undergoes great changes daily.

**THE EXHIBITION** *Fashion Talks: Fashion as Communication*, which was shown for several months at the Museum for Communication, Berlin,<sup>5</sup> was designed to explore – by looking at the messages conveyed by clothes – how people deal with fashion, both individually and collectively. Accompanied by Vera Franke, one of two curators, I took a stroll through the exhibition. Starting with the illustrated timeline *Style Stones*, which showed how closely the history of fashion has been interwoven with important historical events, such as the feminist movement, the Olympic Games and the two World Wars, I passed between a pair of

**Fashion is the outside of consumer society. The inside may well be uniformity.**





mirrors that confronted me with my own reflection. Like many others, I was forced first to reflect upon my own image, as well as others', before starting my journey in the world of communication through fashion.

## STANDARDIZING IDENTITY

The word *fashion* originates from Latin *facio*, which means making or doing and refers to a process. "To fashion" implies a conscious activity of self-reflection and construction of one's identity. Identity is composed in turn of both individual characteristics and affinity to a group (or groups). Thus what a person seeks to express by his or her appearance is individuality on the one hand and membership of a certain class or a social group on the other. By leading into the exhibition with a uniform, the curators elegantly indulged themselves in a complex topic of identity construction by means of commodities.

For centuries uniform dress functioned as a symbolic instrument of both inclusion and exclusion, maintaining strong hierarchies within a society. To this day the highly codified language of uniforms remains accessible only to those who have the knowledge to recognize the signs and codes of belonging and distinction. But who ever said contemporary fashion doesn't function according to the same rules? Reading labels and almost invisible designer signatures in everyday dress is a rather difficult task, which requires keeping abreast of style changes and monitoring the latest collections.

With a postman's attire as an illustration of a uniform in the more common sense, the curators initiated a series of associations between modern status markers (such as labels, headphones, and glasses) and more conventional elements of uniform dress (such as buttons, epaulets, and textile colors). Today status-manifesting signs are very diverse and cannot be reduced to epaulets. In the age of advertising and electronic media, anything we possess can serve as a sign of symbolic or economic capital: from drinking water brands and real estate to the number of stars of eBay accounts and number of friends on Facebook.

VISITORS TO THE *Fashion Talks* exhibition were invited to request the addition of new youth cultures that they thought were not included in the existing database by filling in a form on an old-fashioned typewriter. The notion that urban youth cultures are laboratories for new trends runs through the whole exhibition, showing how contemporary designers and mainstream fashion brands seek out certain subcultural styles for commercial purposes in order to capitalize on their subversive allure for larger consumer groups. The adaptation of initially shocking and distinctive punk-style clothing by mass-market fashion brands perfectly illustrates this mechanism, and paves the way for the curators to open a discussion on *strategies of fashion marketing*, involving pop and celebrity culture, DIY, retro and vintage, changing beauty standards, politics and social engagement. For example, the commercial exploitation of the DIY trend as a marketing strategy

found its expression in *colliers de chien* (paper bracelets by Hermes), available for download and, at least, free of charge. Meanwhile, the *Fendi DIY Baguette Bag*, a woven, unfinished *Fendi Baguette* with everything necessary to complete it, was priced at "only" \$995 at Net-a-Porter.com. The expensive opportunity to have your own one-of-a-kind designer bag is a perfect illustration of how personalization, used commercially, is turned into industrial pseudo-individualism.

## 3 IN 1: JEANS, TARTAN, AND CAMOUFLAGE AS ORIGINALS AND SARTORIAL OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The term *jeans* comes from the name of the city of Genoa, Italy, where cotton fabric was produced and exported to the rest of Europe. Originally manufactured as work clothes for gold-hunters, jeans became one of the basic items in the wardrobe of many youth gang members across the Western



**For each subculture, there is a need for it to distinguish itself. And exclude others.**



hemisphere in the 1950s, after being popularized by James Dean in Nicholas Ray's film *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). If jeans in the 1950s communicated open rebellion, nowadays they are a more or less universal uniform, suitable for any occasion, from business meetings to beach volleyball games.<sup>6</sup>

Associating the history of jeans styles (which are currently dominated by a craze for vintage and worn-out looks) with cultural trends, the exhibition commented on the dramatic results of the production of jeans with a vintage twist. For example, producing a pair of jeans consumes an enormous amount of water, with damaging consequences in parts of the world that suffer from water shortages. This is one of the reasons why some jeans producers are researching more ecological methods of manufacturing. Moreover, the huge demand for jeans that appear worn has led to an increased use of sandblasting, which causes deadly illnesses among workers.

**ANOTHER INTERESTING** part of the exhibition involved tartans, woven patterns of intersecting horizontal and vertical bands in various colors. Tartans as we know them today were widely adopted in Scotland from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on: the earliest illustration of Scottish soldiers wearing plaid dates back to 1631.<sup>7</sup> In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, when rivalry with England turned into outright rebellion, tartans became a symbol of patriotic unity against the English. Recognizing this, the English Dress Act of 1746 after the Battle of Culloden banned tartans in civilian circles, although they were still allowed in the Highland regiments of the British Army. Although the ban was repealed in 1782, it was King George IV's official visit to Scotland in 1822 that signaled a real change in public attitudes to tartan. Almost overnight, tartan dress became highly fashionable.<sup>8</sup>

The notion that tartans always served to distinguish families is incorrect. Tartans were originally associated with a district or a region, and only gradually came to refer to families or clans.<sup>9</sup> In modern times, *trade tartans* have been used for decorative and commercial purposes, while *commemorative tartans* are commissioned for anniversaries, events, or institutions.<sup>10</sup> The Diana Memorial tartan, presented in the exhibition, was launched after the death of Princess Diana in 1997 to benefit her charities. Some significant development in the design and use of tartans has been seen in the growth of *corporate tartans*, which promote goods of Scottish origin on global markets. Sports-related tartans have also proved successful, perhaps because the bond among fans is as passionate as any family ties. The most celebrated examples of the use of tartans in the fashion industry are found in the 1993–1994 Vivienne Westwood collection *Anglomaniya*, which appear to have been inspired by the uniforms of Scottish regiments, and in Alexander McQueen's exploration of Scottish dress and its political history, as well his own Scottish heritage, in several of his collections (*Highland Rape*, 1995; *Widows of Culloden*, 2006–2007).

Having been appropriated by a number of subcultures, tartans became increasingly detached from Highland dress, and the checked patterns lost any association with Scotland. Burberry check, introduced in 1924 and originally used as a coat lining, lost its association with the upper class after being copied thousands of times. The *profile drift* that occurred

after Burberry became associated with the chav subculture forced Burberry to launch a rebranding campaign.

While tartans originated as a symbol of distinction, camouflage (from the French word *camoufler*; to disguise), originally served to let the wearer go unnoticed by blending with the surroundings or resembling something else. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most army uniforms were made of bright colors in order to be easily distinguished from the enemy in combat situations. Also, if an army had a reputation as a fierce fighting unit, the very sight of the uniform might strike fear into the enemy. But with the use of firearms of increasing range and accuracy, brightly colored uniforms became easy targets on the battlefield.

**DURING WORLD WAR I**, several artists inducted into military service produced camouflage designs. The natural world of animals, insects, and plants served as inspiration. The French Cubist artist André Mare (1885–1932) designed camouflage schemes used on land, while at sea Norman Wilkinson's (1878–1971) dazzle patterns were meant to confuse enemy gunners about the speed, range, and heading of warships and troop carriers. Indeed, after the two World Wars, demand for new design was high and creativity flourished. Military camouflage patterns penetrated into conventional fashion from World War I onward. Certain contemporary subcultures, such as the junglists, a UK-based drum-and-bass youth culture originating in West Kingston, Jamaica, incorporate camouflage into their styles. Today camouflage is appropriated across the whole spectrum of fashion, from the high end to mass-market brands. Designer labels market "urban camouflage", fashionable garments, evening gowns, and accessories with a "camo" touch, playing on its original associations with disguise and power. Today's "urban camouflage", by serving a desire to stand out and show off, has reversed the patterns' original purpose.

## THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE

The curators' decision to give designer pieces priority over expensive multi-media installations paid off. The simple but functional design of the exhibition space gave it an alternative Berlin look and a slightly relaxed industrial atmosphere.

The exhibition succeeded elegantly in conveying important messages: it presented fashion as a cultural phenomenon and a system of signification through which society's experiences, order, values, and beliefs are communicated. By establishing *uniformity* as a basic principle of fashion, clearly seen throughout the exhibition, the curators encouraged visitors to reflect on questions of individuality and conformity, personal and group identity. After its presentation at the beginning of the exhibition, the uniform serves as a reference point for successive themes. It kicks off a di-



alogue between original and copy, for example, in which the uniform is first presented in its explicit sense, then transplanted into the sphere of subcultures, where the notion of a uniform has been redefined to serve principles of exclusion and inclusion according to people's interests, political views, class, and work situation.

At the same time, the exhibition illustrated the principle of mixing, restyling, and recycling by bringing together designer pieces, elements of uniforms and second-hand clothes. Shuffling and mixing meanings by putting together elements in a seemingly random, non-compatible manner – and giving total freedom to individual expression and non-verbal communication through fashion objects – became the apogee of the exhibition.

*Fashion Talks* convincingly hammers down the last nail in the debate on who sends the message: the consumer, media, the designer, or the manufacturer. Indeed, meaning is created by the society as a whole through a constant process of non-verbal communication by means of clothing. Moreover, the medium of fashion is a message of its own. Its very existence signifies long-lasting trends of change, migration, globalization, ecology, individualism, identity, gender, and appearance. This excursion into the world of fashion and identity made me realize that a little bit of courage in picking and mixing clothing items would do my image good. ✖

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**Andrei Pleșu**

A Romanian philosopher, essayist, journalist, literary critic and art critic. He has by turns been culture minister (1989–1991) and foreign minister (1997–1999),

and member of the Council for the Study of the Archives of Romania's former secret police Securității (2000–2004). Awarded the New Europe Prize in 1993. This was the impetus for New Europe College, which Pleșu founded in 1994 in Bucharest.

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Degree in journalism in 1982. Began as a reporter for the national daily, *Komsomolskaia Pravda*. After an advanced degree in literature, she began in 1989 to work

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politics in Central Europe] (1999) and *Ett äventyr i Staten: Carl Gustav Heraeus (1671–1725) från Stockholm till kejsarhovet i Wien* [An adventure in the state: Carl Gustav Heraeus (1671–1725) from Stockholm to the Vienna imperial court] (2003).

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**Peter Johnsson**

Peter Johnsson is a foreign correspondent. Working for Nordic media and based in Warsaw, he has covered the countries in East-Central Europe since 1980. He is

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**Pontus Reimers**

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press neighbor

# THE HAWKER OF THE NEW AGE

**T**he Russian Orthodox Church's Primate, Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow, appointed in 2009, must be counted as part of the true economic upper class in today's Russia. His private fortune is estimated to be 4 billion US dollars. Kyrill's predecessors were also equipped with an official residence and official cars, but none of them could be described as an oligarch. But now that private capitalism finally has triumphed in Russia, it would perhaps be odd if the church wasn't also seen as

something that could be exploited to get rich.

Thus the patriarch has in his personal possession not only a wristwatch, worth approximately €30,000, and a large private apartment, worth well over a million euros, which he appropriated with the help of the government, getting them to evict the previous resident, a former minister of health. Among his private assets are, in addition, a villa in Switzerland, an airplane, a fleet with a Cadillac Escalade, a Mercedes S, a Toyota Land Cruiser; and he has business interests

in tobacco, oil, fish. Much of this appears to be gifts from individuals who, according to representatives of the church hierarchy, desire that their office holder "should not appear in a worse light than the representatives of the worldly power, that the temple should not look worse than the house of secular power".

**The information comes from a report by the philosopher Michail Ryklin, "Patriarch und Pussy Riot", in Lettre International, No. 97 (Summer 2012).**



## HIJACKERS AND REVOLUTIONARIES PLAYING WITH THE RULES – NOT BY THE RULES

“ Good revolutionaries are those who channel a tidal wave of popular dissatisfaction and mass upheaval in order to smash the obstacles that hinder a nation’s development, to clear the road cluttered up by the ancien régime, and to build upon what has been achieved – in other words, to resume a track of evolution derailed or arrested by their predecessors. This is what the revolutionaries in the Baltic and the central eastern European states did; they built upon the achievements of prewar statehood within a new international environment much more supportive of liberal democracy. In a sense, they returned to the track of evolution interrupted, reversed, or put on hold by the authoritarian leaders, but they completed this return with new historical experience and a new global vision.

Bad revolutionaries, on the other hand, are those who try to implement their utopian doctrines regardless of circumstances, regardless of the domestic and international environment, of political culture or of economic development. They escalate violence and spill blood because they believe that goals justify means, that any failure results merely from insufficient will, and that any resistance of

circumstances is merely proof of sabotage. Communist revolutionaries are the best examples of the sort, and today’s attempts to ‘democratize’ Iraq and Afghanistan have something in common.

The Orange leaders were neither good nor bad revolutionaries, because they were not revolutionaries at all. They simply hijacked the revolutionary movement that was genuinely driven by popular dissatisfaction with the corrupted regime and its total lawlessness and impunity. They replaced their predecessors but failed to implement any changes that could be deemed revolutionary, primarily the rule of law that is crucial for any other reforms in the country. Throughout all five years of their tenure, they demonstrated the same nepotism and disrespect for legality as their predecessors. For five years, they stubbornly played with the rules, rather than by the rules.”

**Mykola Riabchuk, *Gleichschaltung: Authoritarian Consolidation in Ukraine, 2010–2012*. Kiev: K. I. S. Publishing 2012**

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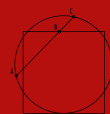
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